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# **HOPE FOR THE EARTH**

**A HANDBOOK  
FOR  
CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS**

**Sharon Delgado**

**assisted by**

**Guarionex Delgado-Seijo**

**Dedicated to  
our children and grandchildren  
to the seventh generation**

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# **Table of Contents**

Introduction		page 5
How To Use This Handbook		page 7
Session One	The Church: Community of Praise	page 9
Session Two	The Church: A Repentant Community	page 13
Session Three	The Church: Agent of Reconciliation	page 16
Session Four	The Church: A Holy Nation	page 19
Session Five	The Church: Household of God	page 24
Session Six	The Church: Steward of Creation	page 28
Session Seven	The Church: Light to the Nations	page 32
Session Eight	The Church: Prophet to the Nations	page 35
Session Nine	The Church: Community of Hope	page 40
Session Ten	The Church: Covenant Community	page 43
Resources:	An Annotated Bibliography	page 47
Endnotes		page 51





# Introduction

Is there hope for the earth? The ecological problems facing humanity are massive. Consider the following words from the United Methodist Book of Resolutions, 1992:

Humankind is destroying the global ecological balance which provides the life-support systems for the planet. Signs of the crisis are evident all around us. The global ecological imbalance produces environmental destruction.

Polluted air pervades the atmosphere. Garbage abounds with little space for disposal. Polluting gases destroy the ozone layer and cause global warming. Deforestation leads to soil erosion, a lack of carbon storage, inadequate water quantity and poor quality and the loss of species, thus a reduction in biological diversity. The misuse of pesticides and fertilizers contributes to the poisoning of our soils and creates products harmful to all life.

Present social, political, and economic development structures fail to provide the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter for an estimated 5.4 billion people. Additionally, at least one billion people live in absolute poverty. The environmental crisis results in social unrest and mounting violence.<sup>1</sup>

This handbook is based on the belief that several themes from the Wesleyan tradition can help the Church become a powerful force in the struggle to bring about a just and sustainable world. Each of the ten sessions of this study uses the Wesleyan Quadrilateral to analyze different aspects of the ecological crisis and to discern faithful responses by the Church. In other words, the foundation for our study is the Word of God as "revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, confirmed by reason<sup>2</sup>".

Other Wesleyan themes that will be referred to in this study include: the synthesis between personal spiritual growth and social concern, the idea of a world parish, and respect for a diversity of perspectives within the Church. The tradition of covenant groups for support and mutual accountability will also be explored as a potentially valuable practical tool for meeting the great challenges of the ecological crisis.

John Wesley believed that personal conversion would lead to a changed society. He said, "Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergy or laity, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the Kingdom of God upon earth".<sup>3</sup> People who seek to do God's will can have a profound effect on the society and world around them.

The potential power of revived Christian hope for the future of this planet and faithful action by the Church on behalf of the earth and its people cannot be measured. The purpose of this handbook is to help guide, inform, equip, and empower Christians to bring the resources of our faith to bear on the struggle to bring about a just and sustainable future.

Sharon Delgado



# How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is a practical guide which will help Christian groups address the ecological crisis in an informed and methodical way. It provides an overview of various aspects of the ecological crisis, as well as biblical and theological perspectives which can provide a foundation for meeting the crisis. It also gives practical suggestions for ongoing group education and action.

Meeting every two weeks or every month will allow time between meetings for group members to follow through on the education and action items which the group chooses to undertake. Groups will vary in focus depending on locale, on priorities of group members, and on how the group discerns the Spirit's call.

The group can be made up of people from one church, or it can be an ecumenical group. There are various options for group leadership. One person can lead the whole series, three different people can lead each of the three sections on an ongoing basis, or leadership can rotate among members of the group. Each group member will need a copy of this handbook in order to prepare for the meetings. Reading each session in advance and reflecting on the issues raised will save time and greatly enrich the discussions.

It is important to meet together once as a group before beginning this study. At that initial meeting, people can introduce themselves to each other and share their concerns and hopes about these issues. Group leader(s) can give an overview of the study. It would be helpful at this time for group members to covenant together to attend each meeting, to pray daily for the world and to participate in the group's activities.

Group members may take a few minutes at the beginning of each meeting for checking in with each other and for prayer. Then the group can use the handbook to guide their discussion. Each session is divided into the following three sections:

## BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION (30 minutes)

During this time in the meeting, the group will read and discuss several ideas that relate to the session's theme, using Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience to provide a spiritual foundation for approaching the issues raised.

## EDUCATING OURSELVES AS A GROUP (30 minutes)

This is a time for ongoing education about issues related to the ecological crisis. The group will read and discuss the educational materials presented in the handbook which relate to the session's theme. There will also be time for brief reports by group members.

## PLANNING FOR ACTION (45 minutes)

At this point in the meeting, the group will focus on actions to be taken before the next meeting. Action suggestions will be related to issues raised during the previous discussions.

People may need to meet in sub-groups between regular meetings to complete the plans put together by the group. Most groups will not follow through with all of the suggestions, but this handbook does provide an overview of some of the many available arenas for action.

## FOLLOWING THE LAST SESSION

My hope is that many groups, after completing this study, will decide to stay together and continue on in reflection, study, and action. Groups could go on using the same basic group format or could organize themselves in another way. The last session of this study sets aside time for the group to make those decisions.

There are many resources and guides for groups to use for ongoing meetings. The "Resources" section at the end of this handbook provides an annotated bibliography which might be helpful.





# Session 1

## The Church: Community of Praise

"Let them praise the name of the Lord, for God commanded and they were created."

Psalm 148: 5

### BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

**Purpose:** To acknowledge the grandeur of God's creation and to respond as God's people with awe and praise.

#### SCRIPTURE

According to the Bible, human beings are called to glorify and praise God along with the rest of the creation.

**Hebrew Scriptures:** "Let them praise the name of the Lord, for God commanded and they were created... Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds! Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and women alike, old and young together! Let them praise the name of the Lord." Psalm 148: 5,9-13

❖ How does the creation glorify God? How can humans glorify God in concert with the rest of creation?

The Bible also claims that God is revealed through the natural world.

**New Testament:** "Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things God has made."

Romans 1:19-20

#### TRADITION

Christian tradition upholds this view.

"God writes the gospel not in the Bible alone, but on trees and flowers and clouds and stars".<sup>1</sup>

Martin Luther

"The world around us is the mighty volume wherein God hath declared himself. Human languages and characters are different in different na-

tions. And those of one nation are not understood by the rest. But the book of nature is written in an universal character, which everyone may read in his own language. It consists not of words, but things which picture out the Divine perfection. The firmament every where expanded, with all its starry host, declares the immensity and magnificence, the power and wisdom of its Creator... Even the actions of animals are an eloquent and a pathetic language. [They] have a thousand engaging ways, which, like the voice of God speaking to our hearts, command us to preserve and cherish them."<sup>2</sup> John Wesley

❖ How is God revealed through the natural world?

#### REASON

Science is continually revealing more to us about the natural world. Reason demands that our understanding of the universe be informed by science.

"Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind."<sup>3</sup> Albert Einstein

Science is revealing that we live in an incredibly vast, complex, and interrelated universe. Christians should not shy away from scientific discoveries and theories about the origin and nature of the universe. Science is not at odds with religious faith. Science and religion are looking at the same reality from different perspectives.

"The new [scientific] story of creation does not reject or replace biblical Christianity in any way. The traditional concepts of our faith are still valid, and nothing is being discarded. Everything is simply, yet importantly, being seen in a fresh way, as if putting on a new pair of sunglasses. The new [scientific] cosmology may be understood as a further revelation of the gospel, not a different gospel. It is a broader and fuller understanding of the way things are and always have been."<sup>4</sup>

Michael Dowd

❖ Does science contradict or enhance your understanding of God and the universe? How do you reconcile science and religious belief?

## EXPERIENCE

We have all seen photographs of the earth from space. This view of our planet is a new experience for humanity.

"Earth reminded us of a Christmas tree ornament hanging in the blackness of space. As we got farther and farther away it diminished in size. Finally, it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine. That beautiful, warm, living object looked so fragile, so delicate... Seeing this has to change a person, has to make a person appreciate the creation of God and the love of God."<sup>5</sup>

James Irwin, Astronaut

❖How does the image of the earth in space affect you?

Even simple experiences of the natural world can bring us closer to God and can nourish us spiritually.

"We need to take the time to sit under trees, look at water, and at the sky, observe small biotic communities of plants and animals with close attention, get back in touch with the living earth.... We can start to release the stifled intuitive and creative powers of our organism, to draw and to write poetry, and to know that we stand on holy ground."<sup>6</sup>

Rosemary Radford Ruether

❖Describe a time you felt close to God in a natural setting, or felt awe at the magnificence of the creation.

## EDUCATING OURSELVES AS A GROUP

**Purpose:** *To allow science to inform our understanding of the created universe and our place in it.*

❖Read and discuss the following:

Stories about the origin and nature of the universe are integral to most religious traditions, including our Judeo-Christian tradition. The creation stories in Genesis were written from the perspective of ancient Hebrew cosmology, which envisioned a universe with waters above and below the earth, separated by a firmament in which the sun, moon, and stars were set. Although science has changed our world view, the spiritual truths which the Bible's creation-centered passages were written to impart are still valuable for us today. These include the following affirmations: God created the universe; human beings are created along with all other creatures, but are also unique; God intends for human beings to care for the earth as stewards; the creation, including the human being, is good; human beings have freedom of choice; there are consequences for human sin.

As valuable as our biblical creation stories are, our understanding of the universe as revealed through science can actually complement what we learn about God from the Bible. Learning more about the universe can help us learn more about the Creator of the universe. As our universe is seen as ever vaster and more complex, our Creator is continually being revealed as far greater and more amazing than we ever could have imagined.

Only now do the people of the world have a shared story about the nature of the universe and how it came to be. This story differs from the stories of the past because science is based on empirical evidence. The knowledge gained by the scientific method can be put to technological use, thus "proving" the validity of its discoveries. Understanding the sub-atomic make-up of reality has given people the ability to create atomic weapons. Knowledge about DNA has given people the ability to do genetic engineering.

Scientists are continually making new discoveries which shed further light on the nature and origin of the universe, and which point out the limitations of earlier theories. But generally accepted scientific theories point to a vast, complex, and interrelated universe which has been evolving for approximately 15 billion years. People of faith see the hand of God in this process.

We know now that the size of the universe is far greater than our ancestors could have dreamed.



Our sun is one of two hundred billion stars that make up the Milky Way galaxy. The Milky Way is so vast that light, traveling at three hundred thousand kilometers per second, takes one hundred thousand years to cross it. And yet, the *observable* universe contains over a hundred thousand million galaxies.<sup>7</sup>

Scientific discoveries about the vastness of outer space have their counterpart in discoveries about the inner dimensions of matter. Quantum physics reveals that atoms are not physical "building blocks" after all. The empty spaces within atoms are also vast. If the size of an atom could be expanded so that its diameter was the size of a football field, its nucleus would be smaller than the period at the end of this sentence. The electrons circling around the perimeter would be too small to see, since 99.999 percent of the atom's mass is found in the nucleus.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, the smallest sub-atomic particles are not really particles in the true sense of the word at all. In scientific experiments, sometimes they react as matter and sometimes they react as waves. The distinction between matter and energy may not be as clear-cut as we have believed.

Our new awareness of the vastness of both outer and inner space is matched by an incredibly expanded understanding of time. Most scientists tell us that the universe came into being between 10 and 15 billion years ago through a remarkable process called the "Big Bang" (it has also been called "The Bright Light"), which set the evolution of the universe into motion.

Scientists estimate that the earth is about 4 1/2 billion years old. If we use a time scale in which one year is equal to those 4 1/2 billion years, it can help us get a clearer sense of the time frame in which the earth's evolution has occurred.

For the first three months of the year, the molten earth was cooling, oceans and continents were forming, gases were forming an atmosphere. Earthquakes and volcanoes were shaping the evolving landscape, much as they are still doing today.

Nine months ago, ancient bacteria first appeared in the oceans. Ancient algae appeared three months ago. The first animals appeared in the oceans two months ago. Just a little over a month ago, plants and animals began living on land.

Life evolved in the sea and on land in diverse, complex, and amazing ways, with each creature developing in its own unique habitat. Symbiotic relationships formed among creatures, and food chains developed, bringing about an interconnected web of life.

It was just three and a half hours ago that the earliest human beings first appeared on the scene. Our ancient civilizations appeared just one minute ago, and our modern industrial society would just be

a blip on the time line. Relatively speaking, we are a very young species.

Only now, with the help of modern science, are people all over the world beginning to learn the incredible story of the nature and origin of the universe. We are also learning about how interconnected we are with other species, and how dependent we are on the earth for life itself. Our bodies are over 90 percent water, and the water that flows through us has almost the same salt concentration as the water in the oceans. Our bodies are made up of the same elements that make up the earth's crust and, for that matter, that make up the dust from stars. Our DNA shows us how closely aligned we are with other creatures.

And yet, we human beings have been blessed with the ability to reflect on ourselves, and on the awesome universe which God has created. Surely our God is worthy of awe and praise!

"The new cosmic story emerging into human awareness overwhelms all previous conceptions of the universe for the simple reason that it draws them all into its comprehensive fullness. Who can learn what this means and remain calm?"<sup>9</sup>

Brian Swimme

## PLANNING FOR ACTION

**Purpose:** *To plan ways to praise and worship God, in ways that kindle a sense of awe and responsibility for the creation.*

- ❖ Using the resources on the next page or other resources, plan to work with your pastor to organize a worship service for a Sunday in the near future, with a creation-centered theme. Ideas for the service can be shared at this meeting.
- ❖ Plan a field trip for your group that will take you out into the natural world: birdwatching, hiking, backpacking.
- ❖ Covenant together to each spend some time alone outside before the next meeting, reflecting on the gift of God's creation.
- ❖ Organize a "rotating library" for the group, by having members bring books to share with others in the group.

## WORSHIP RESOURCES

### CALL TO WORSHIP (from Psalm 148)

**Leader:** Praise the Lord! Praise God from the heavens, praise God in the heights!

**People:** PRAISE GOD, SUN AND MOON. PRAISE GOD, ALL YOU SHINING STARS! PRAISE GOD, YOU HIGHEST HEAVENS, YOU WATERS ABOVE THE HEAVENS. LET THEM PRAISE THE NAME OF THE LORD.

**Leader:** For God commanded and they were created. Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling God's command.

**People:** MOUNTAINS AND ALL HILLS, FRUIT TREES AND ALL CEDARS! BEASTS AND ALL CATTLE, CREEPING THINGS AND FLYING BIRDS.

**Leader:** Rulers of the earth and all peoples, young men and maidens together, old ones and children!

**People:** LET THEM PRAISE THE NAME OF THE LORD, FOR GOD'S NAME ALONE IS EXALTED; GOD'S GLORY IS ABOVE EARTH AND HEAVEN. PRAISE THE LORD!

### UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

GRACIOUS GOD, CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE IN ALL ITS BEAUTY AND SPLENDOR, WE STAND IN AWE BEFORE YOU. WE ACKNOWLEDGE OUR DEPENDENCE ON YOU, FOR TOGETHER WITH ALL OTHER CREATURES WE DEPEND ON YOU FOR OUR LIFE AND BREATH AND ALL THINGS. WE REPENT OF OUR DEVASTATION OF THE NATURAL WORLD. WE HAVE NOT BEEN COOPERATIVE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE. FORGIVE US AND GIVE US NEW LIFE, THAT WE MAY BE FORCES OF HEALING IN YOUR WORLD. FOR IT IS IN THE NAME OF JESUS THAT WE ASK IT. AMEN.

### WORDS OF GRACE

**Leader:** God's mercy is greater than our sin. God's power is greater than our limitation. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and given new life and sent out as agents of healing in this world.



### SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

#### Old Testament:

- Psalm 24:1 (The earth is the Lord's)  
Genesis 9:8-17- (God's covenant with all creation)  
Psalm 104 (God provides for all creatures; a balanced ecosystem)  
Hosea 4:1-3 (Environmental devastation caused by human sin)  
Job 12:7-8 (Learn about God from other creatures)  
Leviticus 25:1-24 (Sabbath for the land; year of Jubilee)

#### New Testament:

- Romans 8:18-25 (Redemption of all creation)  
Colossians 1:15-20 (All things reconciled to God; Cosmic Christ)  
John 1:1-5 (All things made through the Word; Cosmic Christ)  
Matthew 6:10 (Praying for God's will on earth as in heaven)  
Luke 19:41-44 (Jesus weeping over Jerusalem; warnings)  
Matthew 24:45-47 (Good stewardship)

### SUGGESTED HYMNS

For the Beauty of the Earth; All Creatures of Our God and King; Maker, in Whom We Live; Praise the Lord Who Reigns Above; From All That Dwell Below the Skies; God of the Sparrow God of the Whale; Morning Has Broken; All Things Bright and Beautiful; I Sing the Almighty Power of God, God of This Great Creation (by Jim and Jean Strathdee).

### OTHER IDEAS

- ❖Live plants can adorn the Sanctuary.
- ❖A photograph of the earth from space can be visible.
- ❖Parts of the United Methodist Social Principles from "The Natural World" can be read aloud or printed in bulletin.
- ❖Sections of Psalm 104 can be read creatively by several people, using repetition and overlapping of phrases and words.
- ❖A poem, such as Joanna Macy's "Bestiary" can be read aloud.(see Resources Section)
- ❖Startling facts about the ecological crisis can be printed as a bulletin insert.
- ❖Small plants can be given to children during the Children's Time.
- ❖Trees can be given out after the service.

## Session 2

# The Church: A Repentant Community

**"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

**1 John 1:8**

## BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

**Purpose:** To explore the meaning of sin and repentance in the context of the whole creation.

### SCRIPTURE

According to the Bible, sin damages human relationships with the natural world as well as relationships among human beings:

**Hebrew Scriptures:** "Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel; for the Lord has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land. Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing." Hosea 4:1-3

❖ How does human sin cause social and ecological damage? How do we participate in that sin?

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but God does not leave us without help! Through Christ, we are forgiven and enabled to live righteous lives.

**New Testament:** "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:8-9

❖ Does this promise seem to let people off the hook or to give them a way to change?



## TRADITION

The Church is a community of people who have acknowledged their sin and their need for grace. When thinking of sin, people often focus only on issues of personal morality. Read the following definition of sin from John Wesley:

"Sin is the refusal to acknowledge our dependence on God for life and breath and all things."<sup>1</sup>

Sinfulness involves a refusal to accept the fact that we are *creatures*, created by God to be dependent on God and interdependent with all other creatures. We have refused to live as cooperative members of the community of life, and have wreaked havoc on other people and on the natural world.

❖ How does this concept of sin apply to us today in light of the ecological crisis?

## REASON

"Believing ourselves to be separate from the earth means having no idea how we fit into the natural cycle of life and no understanding of the natural processes of change that affect us and that we in turn are affecting. It means that we attempt to chart the course of our civilization by reference to ourselves alone. No wonder we are lost and confused. No wonder so many people feel their lives are wasted. Our species used to flourish within the intricate and interdependent web of life, but we have chosen to leave the garden. Unless we find a way to dramatically change our civilization and our way of thinking about the relationship between humankind and the earth, our children will inherit a wasteland."<sup>2</sup>

Albert Gore, Jr.

❖ How can we change our way of thinking about the relationship between humankind and the earth? What changes are necessary?

## EXPERIENCE

There is a pervasive sense of powerlessness at the magnitude of the social and ecological problems we face. There is widespread denial, confusion, resignation, and apathy among Christian congregations as well as among other groups in our society.

"Even though it is sometimes hard to see their meaning, we have by now all witnessed surprising experiences that signal the damage from our assault on the environment- whether it's the new frequency of days when the temperature exceeds 100 degrees, the new speed with which the sun burns our skin, or the new constancy of public debate over what to do with growing mountains of waste. But our response to these signals is puzzling. Why haven't we launched a massive effort to save our environment?"<sup>3</sup>

Albert Gore, Jr.

❖ Discuss feelings of powerlessness group members have experienced when facing the ecological crisis.

Knowing God's forgiving love can help people to face the ecological crisis and to acknowledge their complicity in the damage that is being done to the earth . Through faith in Christ, as we accept God's unconditional love and forgiveness, we can face squarely the effects of human sinfulness, move out of paralysis, and become part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

The Church can foster repentance and change through sharing the good news of God's forgiving love as shown to us in Jesus, by clarifying what constitutes sin and repentance in the context of the ecological crisis, and by "bearing fruits that befit repentance" in its own life.

❖ How can sharing God's forgiving love help people face the ecological crisis?

❖ What would it mean for us as individuals to repent of our complicity in the devastation of the earth?

❖ What would it mean for the Church to "bear fruits that befit repentance" in this context? What effect could it have on society?

## EDUCATING OURSELVES AS A GROUP

**Purpose:** *To explore several aspects of the ecological crisis which cause suffering to people, to other creatures, or to the earth itself.*

❖ Read and discuss the following:

### ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

The term "eco-justice" is one that expresses the conviction that ecological issues and justice issues are related. Often the most vulnerable people suffer the most from ecological degradation.

In the United States, people of color are disproportionately affected by toxic contamination by hazardous materials and wastes. While only 26 percent of the population is African-American or Hispanic, 60 percent of the largest toxic-waste facilities are in African-American or Hispanic communities. Three out of every five African Americans and Hispanics live in communities near toxic waste sites. Urban toxic dumps are usually found in cities with large African-American populations, such as St. Louis, Cleveland, Chicago, Atlanta, and Memphis.

Approximately fifty-five percent of poor African-American children have been found to have blood-lead levels which are associated with adverse effects on the nervous system. These statistics can be compared with similar blood-lead levels in one-quarter of poor white children and just seven percent of affluent white children.

Approximately half of all Native Americans also live near toxic waste sites. Economic incentives are used by private companies seeking to dispose of hazardous wastes on tribal lands, since the laws governing waste disposal on such lands are often not as stringent as state and federal laws. Most of the locations which have been proposed for high-level nuclear waste facilities are on or near tribal lands. Uranium spills on Navajo lands have caused so much contamination that Navajo teenagers have cancer rates 17 times the national average.

The children of farm workers in the United States, mainly Hispanics, experience a higher rate of birth defects due to their mothers' exposure to pesticides during pregnancy. Each year, more than 300,000 illnesses are caused by farmworkers' exposure to pesticides.

These grim statistics make it clear that toxic pollution is not simply an ecological issue, but also a racial justice issue.

### PATRIARCHY

For thousands of years, social, economic, and political institutions, including the Church, have been dominated by men. This is changing with the successes of the Feminist Movement, but until recently most societies have denied full equality to women. Women were marginalized, exploited, and excluded from decision-making. In many places in the world, this is still true today.

At the same time, the earth was being exploited.

Ecofeminists claim that this is not just a coincidence, but that patriarchal beliefs and social structures are to blame for both the exploitation of women and other vulnerable people, and also for the exploitation of the earth itself. In many cases, these things go together. Women and their dependent children are often the first to suffer from ecological degradation, since women have traditionally been the primary subsistence gardeners.

God has often been considered in masculine terms, as active, controlling, initiating. At the same time "nature" has often been identified with qualities which are considered feminine. "Mother Earth" has been seen as receptive and nurturing. Destruction of the environment is referred to as the "rape" of the earth. Male domination of both women and nature have both been expressions of patriarchal values and systems.

The competitive, dominating structures of patriarchal society must be transformed. So called "feminine" qualities, such as cooperation and nurture, need to be incorporated into our social structures in order to bring about a humane and sustainable world order.

Images of the Divine also need to be expanded in order to help people become aware of the "feminine" aspects of the Divine. Hence, the importance of using inclusive God-language or a variety of metaphors for God, such as those from Isaiah 66 portraying God as a midwife and mother.

### MILITARISM

Wars today are waged against entire human populations and against the environment as well. Even when war is not being waged, military buildups pollute the earth terribly. From the time of World War II until the late 1960s, and in some cases until today, governments dumped hundreds of thousands of tons of obsolete chemical weapons, nuclear weapons wastes, and conventional ammunition into the oceans, into land dumps, and into the air through open-air burning. Military bases are among the world's worst toxic sites. Cleaning up after the arms race will be a major challenge in the coming years.

### ANIMAL CRUELTY

The increasingly mechanized factory farming industry in the United States is extremely cruel. Consider the plight of chickens in a typical warehouse, with over 80,000 chickens crowded into cages stacked from floor to ceiling. The chickens are usually de-beaked, their feet never touch the earth, lights are kept on day and night to maximize egg production, and they are fed a diet laced with antibiotics.

Likewise, instead of pig farms, today we have a

growing number of huge industrial complexes with over 100,000 pigs housed in narrow stalls, row upon row of them, without room to even turn around. Pigs are routinely fed recycled waste containing high levels of toxics.

Animal testing of cosmetics and household products can be unbelievably cruel. Harsh chemicals are put in the eyes, on sensitive skin areas and even down the throats of animals to see just how damaging these products are.

Clearly the factory farming and animal testing industries need to be reformed. The fact that we allow creatures of God to live in such atrocious conditions and to suffer as they do challenges us to examine our consumption patterns and to find out more about where the products we buy are coming from and at what cost to other creatures, as well as to our human brothers and sisters.

"Confronted with the massive crisis of the deterioration of God's creation and faced with the question of the ultimate survival of life, we ask God's forgiveness for our participation in this destruction of God's creation." The U.M. Book of Resolutions<sup>4</sup>

## PLANNING FOR ACTION

**Purpose:** *To plan ways to educate ourselves and others about these issues, so that we will be able to make informed decisions about what needs to change.*

- ❖ Have each person share why they are concerned about the ecological crisis and what issues concern them the most.
- ❖ Make a list of issues which are of greatest concern to people in the group. Identify the issues which are of top priority for the group as a whole.
- ❖ Have each person choose one issue about which to become well informed on an ongoing basis, so that people in the group become "expert" on different issues.
- ❖ One person can volunteer to give a five minute report on a book or an issue of his or her choice at the next meeting.
- ❖ Plan to invite a speaker to give a presentation to the congregation on one of the top priority issues. Or plan as a group to attend a program on one of the issues.
- ❖ Plan a field trip to a factory farm or a toxic site in or near your community.



# Session 3

## The Church: Agent of Reconciliation

**"God was in Christ reconciling the world to God, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation".**

**2 Corinthians 5:19**

### BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

**Purpose:** To explore what it means to be agents of God's reconciling love in the context of continuing ecological destruction and growing inequity.

#### SCRIPTURE

There are many images in the Bible of a redeemed creation. Consider the following image of the new creation:

**Hebrew Scriptures:** "For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating... They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—and their descendants as well. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox... They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord".  
Isaiah 65:17-18, 23-25

More often in this day and age, we see images of a despoiled creation: polluted air, water, and soil; garbage dumps and toxic sites; tropical and temperate forests that have been decimated; plants and animals that are on the verge of extinction. And we see images of human misery around the world. Clearly, the earth needs to be "redeemed".

❖How would you envision a redeemed creation today?

Christian hope also asserts that the whole creation is to be included in the redemptive process:

**New Testament:** "And through him God was pleased to reconcile all things to God, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross."  
Colossians 1:20

### TRADITION

The United Methodist Church is a diverse community. The Church is called to be an agent of reconciliation in the context of the current ecological crisis. People within our congregations hold a variety of views on the issues we have been discussing. People of good faith may disagree on these difficult and sometimes controversial issues.

"As to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think."<sup>1</sup> John Wesley

❖How can we maintain unity in the Church while sorting out difficult and sometimes controversial issues?

### REASON

Respecting each other's opinions, however, does not mean that "anything goes". Our sole concern is not just to keep the peace among ourselves. As the Church of Jesus Christ, we are called to be agents of reconciliation to the whole world. This means working for peace, justice, and the integrity of the creation.

"If dominating and destructive relations to the earth are interrelated with gender, class, and racial domination, then a healed relation to the earth cannot come about simply through technological 'fixes'. It demands a social reordering to bring about just and loving interrelationship between men and women, between races and nations, between groups presently stratified into social classes, manifest in great disparities of access to the means of life. In short, it demands that we must speak of eco-justice, and not simply of domination of the earth as though that happened unrelated to social domination".<sup>2</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether

❖What kind of social reordering could help bring about just relationships among human beings?

- ❖ What kind of social reordering could help bring about a healed relationship with the earth?
- ❖ Could these changes complement each other?

## EXPERIENCE

Envisioning the changes that are necessary to bring about healing and reconciliation of the earth and its people can provide direction and motivation for action. But we also need to allow ourselves to experience the pain and grief that comes from facing the current situation.

"Conversion of vision is necessary, but it is not enough. We also need conversion of heart and compassion so that we enter into the suffering of the earth, so that we do not try to escape from it or remedy it from the outside, but rather that in love we take it upon ourselves, into ourselves. In sharing its wounds, we will become participants in the healing of the earth."<sup>3</sup>

Mary Evelyn Jegen

In this way, we will be motivated at the deepest level to seek to be reconciled with God, with our fellow creatures, and with the earth itself.

❖ What would it mean for us to experience reconciliation on each of these three levels (God, fellow creatures, earth)? How would our lives be changed?

## EDUCATING OURSELVES AS A GROUP

**Purpose:** To explore the underlying causes of environmental destruction, inequity, and the connections between these problems.

- ❖ Report by group member.
- ❖ Another person volunteer to give a 5 minute report on the issue they are studying at the next meeting.
- ❖ Read and discuss the following:

### JOBS vs. ENVIRONMENT

Many of the issues we have been discussing are complex and sometimes controversial. In the United States, people are polarized because of the apparent conflict between jobs vs. the environment. The truth is, the underlying causes of economic distress and ecological destruction are often the same. Take, for instance, the controversial issue of forest preservation and use.

The decline of jobs in the timber industry in the Pacific Northwest did not begin with the protection of



spotted owl habitat. The timber industry has literally been using up its own resource. Over-cutting of timber from private lands has led to an increasing demand for timber from our National Forests. No more than 10-15 percent of original old growth forest in the Pacific Northwest remains today. Environmental laws are applied to protect species that are endangered by such extensive habitat destruction.

The timber industry continues to mechanize its operations, greatly speeding up the rate at which trees are cut down and processed, while reducing the number of workers needed by the industry. Large quantities of unprocessed logs are exported as raw materials, rather than being sold as "value-added" products here at home. A recent Forest Service/Bureau of Land Management report suggested that banning the export of raw logs would generate 15,000 domestic jobs. Such a ban would also certainly save trees.

There are underlying problems which cause both economic and ecological damage. It is not helpful for either side in such debates to over-simplify the issues, or to blame each other. The Church can provide a forum for people to meet in good faith together to explore the underlying causes of such problems, and to work to find solutions.

### POOR vs. RICH NATIONS

The issue of priorities can produce controversy at the regional, national, or international level. People may disagree about where scarce resources would best be allocated and where people's energy would best be expended.

At the international level, people from poorer nations often have different priorities than people from more affluent nations. Issues such as global warming, the thinning of the ozone layer, and toxic pollution may seem abstract to people who are dealing on a daily basis with the environmental issues which affect their lives, and the lives of the majority of the world's people.

For instance, people in the developing world are concerned with environmental issues such as famine and dislocation caused by drought,

deforestation, erosion, and the loss of land for subsistence farming. Another concern is access to safe water. Last year, 3.2 million children died from diarrheal disease. Most of these cases could have been prevented by access to safe drinking water and decent sanitation.

Even though the priorities of people from different nations vary, we will have to work together to solve many of the problems that we face. Environmental problems impact people across national boundaries.

Most of the threats to the global environment, such as climate change, toxic contamination, and destruction of the ozone layer, are caused by people in affluent nations. But poverty also contributes to the destruction of the environment. Desperate people overexploit natural resources to meet immediate survival needs. Landless families slash and burn plots in the rain forest, plow steep slopes which are vulnerable to erosion, and subject the soil to overuse. As these areas are degraded, they offer diminishing yields to their poor inhabitants. This ecological decline perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

The fact is, many of the major problems of the North and of the South will only be solved if there is international cooperation to do so. Damage to the environment, exacerbated by both affluence and poverty, affects us all.

The solutions to our economic and environmental problems, at home or around the world, will not be "either-or" solutions. We cannot sacrifice either the well-being of vulnerable people or the well-being of the natural world without jeopardizing our own well-being, and that of our children and grandchildren. Our futures are intertwined.

#### A FORUM FOR DIALOGUE

The Church has a role to play in helping people understand these complex issues, so they can work together for positive change. Of course, there is the danger that opening up these subjects to discussion may lead to divisions in a congregation. But to avoid discussing these issues openly in the Church is to contribute to the present darkness of ignorance and denial.

Besides, the opportunity for constructive change is greater than the risk of division. The Church can provide a forum for constructive dialogue among people with different views. Where else is this happening? Too often, we just discuss these issues with those who think like we do. But in our churches we have people with a variety of views, who already love one another. Within a healthy church community, people are less likely to stereotype, label, and discount each other's views. The Church could provide a forum for people to meet in good

faith together to explore the underlying causes of the problems we face, and to seek to find solutions.

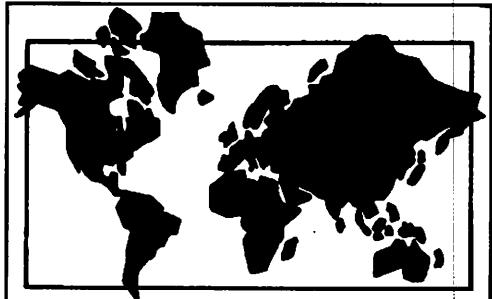
"Who is our neighbor: the Samaritan? the outcast? the enemy? Yes, yes, of course. But it is also the whale, the dolphin, and the rain forest. Our neighbor is the entire community of life, the entire universe."<sup>4</sup>

Brian Patrick

#### PLANNING FOR ACTION

*Purpose: To plan forums for open and respectful dialogue among people with various perspectives while sorting out difficult and sometimes controversial issues.*

- ❖ List specific issues which you believe are controversial among members of your congregation.
- ❖ Discuss whether or not these are issues openly discussed in your church. If so, what is the result? If not, how do you think it would be?
- ❖ Discuss the following suggestions for forums which might foster communication, education, and problem-solving in your congregation. Then plan to organize a gathering which the group thinks would work in your congregation. The following are some suggestions:
  - ❖ Have your committee host a small group gathering to discuss a controversial issue. Make the format and the "rules" clear, and have the facilitator be adept at conflict resolution.
  - ❖ Plan to host a debate, or to organize a presentation and open discussion on one of the above subjects.
  - ❖ Ask your pastor to preach on controversial issues occasionally. A "Sunday Forum" can be held afterwards, so that people can express their views.



# Session 4

## THE CHURCH: A HOLY NATION

**"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of the One who called you out of darkness into God's wonderful light".**

**1 Peter 2:9**

### BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

**Purpose:** To explore how the spiritual discipline of simplicity is an essential aspect of "holiness of heart and life" in the context of the ecological crisis.

#### SCRIPTURE

The Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament both warn of the spiritual dangers of affluence.

**Hebrew Scriptures:** "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God." Proverbs 30:8ff

**New Testament:** "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:19-21

❖What do you understand to be the spiritual dangers of affluence?

#### TRADITION

John Wesley took the danger of wealth very seriously:

"Any 'Christians' who take for themselves any more than the plain necessities of life, live in an open habitual denial of the Lord. They have gained for themselves riches and hell-fire."<sup>1</sup> John Wesley

❖What is your gut level reaction to Wesley's harsh words? Do you agree? Why or why not?

One of the distinguishing characteristics of United Methodism is the strong connection between personal spirituality and social concern. Our tradition teaches that "holiness" is not simply a private affair. We must take into consideration the effects of our lives on the people and the society around us. That is what John Wesley meant when he said, "The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness but social."<sup>2</sup>

At this time in history we must also consider the effects of our lifestyles on the earth itself. Affluence, poverty, and environmental degradation are interrelated. In the context of the ecological crisis, "holiness of heart and life" requires cutting back in consumption patterns among the wealthy, sharing the earth's resources justly, and caring for the natural world.

#### REASON

The traditional discipline of simplicity makes sense today more than ever before.

"Simplicity is the new necessity of the modern era. Our little planet simply cannot sustain the gluttonous consumption of the wealthy West. Mahatma Gandhi said once that the world has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed. It simply is not a matter of somehow raising the standard of living of the poor of the world to that of the affluent West. America has 6 percent of the world's population and consumes 33 percent of the world's resources... Put simply, the earth cannot afford our lifestyle. No, the answer is clear: we must cut back our standard of living if there is ever to be anything approaching a just distribution of the world's resources."<sup>3</sup>

Richard J. Foster

❖Discuss the "necessity" of conversion to simple living.

#### EXPERIENCE

Simplicity can help us experience a sense of solidarity with the earth and its people.

"It is difficult to relate to statistics, even when we know they represent precious ones for whom Christ died. But it is not hard to relate to a man such as Kallelo Nugusu, who had to sell his two oxen in order to buy food to keep his wife and six children alive when the famine struck Ethiopia. He then had no way to plow his fields and plant his crops, and the food was gone. When asked what he would do, he responded that he didn't know. Then, dropping his head into his hands, he said, 'When my children cry because they are hungry, then it is very hard to be a father.'

Though such accounts touch us deeply, we often feel helpless to do anything. How can we respond with any degree of integrity and effectiveness? It is the Discipline of simplicity that gives us the basis for developing a strategy of action..."<sup>4</sup>

Richard J. Foster

- ❖ How might living simply give one a sense of integrity?
- ❖ How might it be a witness to others of God's love and concern?

## **EDUCATING OURSELVES AS A GROUP**

**Purpose:** To explore how affluence, poverty, and environmental degradation are related.

- ❖ Report by group member.
- ❖ Someone volunteer to give a five minute report on a book or an issue of his or her choice at the next meeting.
- ❖ Read and discuss the following:

### **AFFLUENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION**

Overconsumption by affluent nations is causing massive ecological problems. Two-thirds of the greenhouse gases that threaten the global climate come from the affluent nations, whose industries also release three-fourths of the chemicals that cause acid rain and generate most of the world's hazardous wastes. It is the demand of affluent nations for wood and wood products that drives the destruction of tropical and temperate forests, resulting in the extinction of countless species. Affluent nations have developed over 99 percent of the world's nuclear weapons.

Huge amounts of waste are generated by consumption patterns of the affluent. In the United States, municipal solid waste is being generated at the rate of 5 pounds per person per day, that is, more than one ton per person per year. "Ameri-

cans toss away 180 million razors annually, enough paper and plastic plates and cups to feed the world a picnic six times a year, and enough aluminum cans to make 6,000 DC-10 airplanes."<sup>5</sup>

This results in a huge disposal problem. Of the 20,000 landfills operating in the U.S. in 1979, over 15,000 have reached their full capacity and closed. Trucks now carry massive amounts of waste across our highways from local "transfer stations" to landfills and incinerators in other areas.

Besides municipal solid waste, the U.S. produces even greater amounts of hazardous wastes, which pose even greater challenges for disposal. In addition, our industries produce solid industrial wastes at the rate of one ton per person per year. These figures do not even reflect the output of gaseous wastes, such as the CO<sub>2</sub> which is released into the atmosphere at the rate of 20 tons per person per year. If we consider all of these kinds of waste together, "every person in the United States produces *more than twice his or her weight in waste every day*."<sup>6</sup>

## **POVERTY AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

In the developing world, rural peasants have traditionally subsisted by growing basic foods for local consumption. Poverty is now increasing at an alarming rate because of the growing scarcity of water, food, fodder, and fuel, associated with modern industrial development, overpopulation, and ecological destruction. Agricultural lands continue to be converted to grow foods for export, reducing the land available for subsistence farming, forcing the poorest of the poor off the land. Throughout the developing world, huge slums have grown up on the outskirts of cities, as people go there hoping to find a way to make it in the market economy. Instead, they often find miserable poverty.

## **AFFLUENCE AND INEQUITY**

Developing countries import food and receive food aid from industrialized countries, including the United States. But overall, developing countries export more food than they either import or receive in food aid. Even the nations most seriously affected by hunger and malnutrition continue nonetheless to export food to the United States. Moreover, foods exported from developing countries are generally of a higher protein value than the imported foods.

Besides this, there is a significant flow of money from poorer to richer nations each year because of the world debt crisis. Together, exports from the developing world and their payments of interest on debt offset imports and food aid from industrialized

nations by approximately \$50 billion a year. In other words, the net flow of resources each year is approximately \$50 billion from the poorer nations to the richer nations. Former World Bank president Robert McNamara compared this to "giving a blood transfusion from a sick person to a healthy person."<sup>7</sup>

The gap between the rich and poor around the world is growing. In 1960, the richest 20 percent of the world's people were receiving 70 percent of the world's income, while the poorest 20 percent were receiving just 2.3 percent. By 1989, the gap had grown; the richest 20 percent were receiving almost 83 percent of the global income, while the share of the poorest 20 percent had shrunk to just 1.4 percent. In other words, the share of wealth of the richest fifth of humanity compared to the poorest fifth grew from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 59 to 1 in 1989.

As fossil fuels become more and more expensive, the gap in energy use between the rich and poor countries widens. In the United States, each person uses an average of 24 barrels of oil per year, compared to each person in Europe who uses 12, and each person in sub-Saharan Africa who uses one barrel per year. A person in an advanced industrial nation uses as much energy in 6 months as a person in a developing nation uses in a lifetime.

The contrasts between the lifestyles of the poor and the rich are striking. At least 1.75 billion people have no access to safe water. Their only option is to drink water that is contaminated by human, animal, or agricultural waste. Millions of people die each year of water-borne diseases, simply because they do not have access to clean water or decent sanitation. The most serious water-borne disease, diarrhea, causes almost half of the deaths in developing countries, mostly children under five.

At the same time, ironically, in countries where clean running water is readily available, its use as a beverage is declining. The most extreme case is the United States, where the average intake of soda in 1989 was 176 liters per person, while the average intake of water was 141 liters. "Americans now drink more soda than water from the kitchen sink".<sup>8</sup>

"In choosing daily to live simply, I gain integrity in my own life and make possible wholeness for others."<sup>11</sup>

Disciple II: Into the Word Into the World  
Study Manual

There are also great contrasts in the amount and quality of food consumed among the world's people. Over 1.2 billion people live in absolute poverty, which Robert McNamara defined as "a condition of life so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, high infant mortality and low life expectancy as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency"<sup>9</sup>. For the most part, these people are deprived of a healthy diet.

The world's large middle class lives on a diet based mostly on grain and plant-based protein. This is the healthiest basic diet. Most of the world's 1.25 billion affluent people are meat eaters. They consume three times as much fat as the rest of the world's people and suffer high death rates from diseases which have been associated with affluent lifestyles, such as heart disease, strokes, and certain types of cancer.

Using agricultural land to grow grain for human consumption can feed twenty times as many people as land used to support livestock. If people in the U.S. reduced their annual meat consumption by just 10 percent, over 12 million tons of grain would be made available for human consumption, enough to feed every one of the 60 million people in the world who will starve to death this year.

Overall, the consumption patterns of wealthy nations are depleting the earth's resources at an alarming rate while also continuing to fuel an increasingly unjust distribution of resources. Each child born in an industrialized country will consume twenty to forty times as much in their lifetime as a child born in the developing world. "One billion live in unprecedented luxury; 1 billion live in destitution. Even American children have more pocket money—\$230 a year—than the half-billion poorest people alive."<sup>10</sup>

*Where in the  
world is God  
working?*



## **PERSONAL LIFESTYLE INVENTORY**

### **WHEN YOU TRAVEL, DO YOU:**

- ❖ Find ways to reduce driving
- ❖ Have an energy efficient car
- ❖ Maintain your car properly
- ❖ Check tire pressure regularly
- ❖ Drive at reasonable speeds
- ❖ Do several errands in one trip
- ❖ Carpool
- ❖ Use Public Transportation
- ❖ Use a bicycle
- ❖ Walk

### **IN YOUR HOUSING, DO YOU:**

- ❖ Have good insulation
- ❖ Weatherstrip and caulk around doors and windows
- ❖ Have proper shading
- ❖ Conserve gas and electricity
- ❖ Use energy-efficient appliances
- ❖ Conserve water
- ❖ Provide necessary upkeep
- ❖ Heat or cool areas only when in use
- ❖ Use all available space
- ❖ Use non-toxic, biodegradable products
- ❖ Have passive or active solar heating and cooling
- ❖ Have a solar hot water heater
- ❖ Maintain proper ventilation
- ❖ Use fans or a swamp cooler in summer
- ❖ Prohibit smoking
- ❖ Refuse to use unneeded electric appliances
- ❖ Decorate with living plants, not artificial

### **IN EATING, DO YOU:**

- ❖ Eat low on the food chain
- ❖ Eat food that is grown locally
- ❖ Eat fewer processed foods
- ❖ Rarely eat pre-packaged convenience foods
- ❖ Rarely eat "fast food"
- ❖ Eat at least one cold meal a day
- ❖ Use a microwave when possible
- ❖ Rarely eat "junk food"
- ❖ Drink coffee and soda only in moderation, or better yet, not at all
- ❖ Abstain from alcohol
- ❖ Make water your primary drink
- ❖ Cook and eat foods that build health
- ❖ Buy in bulk
- ❖ Cook in bulk
- ❖ Use all the food you buy

### **IN SHOPPING, DO YOU:**

- ❖ Shop only as needed
- ❖ Shop near your home
- ❖ Support local small businesses
- ❖ Select locally grown food when possible
- ❖ Select in-season food when possible
- ❖ Resist buying unusable trinkets and mementos
- ❖ Refuse to buy heavily packaged products
- ❖ Buy only durable, useful goods
- ❖ Recycle bags or bring your own
- ❖ Buy in bulk
- ❖ Participate in a food co-operative
- ❖ Avoid buying tropical woods
- ❖ Avoid products which might come from endangered species
- ❖ Select refillables over recyclables
- ❖ Select recyclables over disposables



## **PERSONAL LIFESTYLE INVENTORY**

### **IN YOUR CLOTHING, DO YOU:**

- ❖ Buy clothes that last
- ❖ Buy clothes that are needed
- ❖ Resist buying clothes as status symbols
- ❖ Stick to a clothing budget
- ❖ Use a clothesline and/or drying rack
- ❖ Take care of clothes
- ❖ Give away unused clothing
- ❖ Buy few clothes that need dry cleaning
- ❖ Refuse to buy clothes as status symbols
- ❖ Use cloth diapers

### **IN CARING FOR YOUR YARD, DO YOU:**

- ❖ Landscape to conserve water
- ❖ Landscape using native plants
- ❖ Landscape with edible plants
- ❖ Plant trees
- ❖ Have an organic vegetable garden
- ❖ Avoid using pesticides and herbicides
- ❖ Use organic fertilizers
- ❖ Convert your lawn to a meadow
- ❖ Let some land grow wild

### **WHEN YOU DISPOSE OF WASTE, DO YOU:**

- ❖ Recycle cans, glass, tin, cardboard, plastics, newspapers, etc
- ❖ Compost yard and food waste
- ❖ Observe hazardous waste disposal rules
- ❖ Recycle motor oil

### **FOR RECREATION, DO YOU:**

- ❖ Find things to do that are renewing
- ❖ Spend time outside (jogging, birdwatching)
- ❖ Spend time in nature (camping, hiking)
- ❖ Find inexpensive, fun family activities
- ❖ Play games with family or friends
- ❖ Vacation closer to home
- ❖ Use trains instead of planes
- ❖ Read

### **IN YOUR CELEBRATIONS, DO YOU:**

- ❖ Find simple ways to celebrate
- ❖ Resist the media's push to overconsume
- ❖ Develop meaningful family traditions
- ❖ Share with those who have little
- ❖ Include lonely people in your celebrations
- ❖ Broaden Thanksgiving celebrations to include gratitude for those who work on the land, Native peoples, and awareness of those who are hungry.
- ❖ Find life-enhancing ways to celebrate Advent and Christmas, focusing on the birth of Jesus Christ. Buy a living Christmas tree and plant it after Christmas if local climate permits. Simplify gift-giving.

Note: It is clear that this Lifestyle Assessment Inventory is geared toward people who are relatively affluent, by world standards. Many people do not have adequate shelter, food, clothing, health care, or access to transportation. It is hoped that people who move toward simpler lifestyles will divert much of the money they save towards helping bring about a more just and equal sharing of the world's resources.



# Session 5

## The Church: Household of God

**"So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."**

**Ephesians 2:19**

### BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

**Purpose:** To explore our responsibility as the Church to be an example of God's will in the context of the ecological crisis.

#### SCRIPTURE

In ancient Israel, the Temple was the center of worship.

**Hebrew Scriptures:** "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time."

2 Chronicles 7:12-16

Today, churches are important to Christian worship. We gather in churches to worship and witness to the presence of God.

We realize, though, that the Church of Jesus Christ is not really a building. The Church is made up of people all over the world who follow Jesus. We are the church, members of God's household.

**New Testament:** "So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God... built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone..."

Ephesians 2:19-20

As members of God's household, we are called to be witnesses to God's will in the world.

❖ What are some ways our churches (our buildings and our communities) could provide a witness to God's will in the context of the ecological crisis?

#### TRADITION

The United Methodist Social Principles speak of the creation and of the role of the Church in preserving it.:

"All creation is the Lord's and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. Therefore, we repent of our devastation of the physical and nonhuman world. Further, we recognize the responsibility of the church toward life-style and systemic changes in society that will promote a more ecologically just world and a better quality of life for all creation."<sup>1</sup>

❖ Discuss how working for an ecologically just world is related to Christian faith.

#### REASON

Churches can educate their members about these issues and help them to think things through.

"The greatest service the churches could render the world at this time is providing education concerning the facts of the environmental crisis, the ingredients in our current thinking and actions that have contributed to the crisis, and the resources we already have available to us for altering our way of thinking and action in constructive ways."<sup>2</sup>

David Brower

❖ How have our current thinking and acting contributed to the problems we face?

❖ How could the church help to change people's ways of thinking about these issues? How could our scriptures and traditions help?

## EXPERIENCE

The Church can also point to non-material sources of satisfaction:

"If we are ever able to stop destroying our environment, it will be because person by person we decide, by God's grace, to turn aside from greed and materialism. It will be because we learn that joy and fulfillment come through right relationship with God, neighbor and earth, not an ever escalating demand for more and more material consumption. Nowhere is that more possible than in local congregations that combine prayer and action, worship and analysis, deep personal love for the Creator and for the Creator's garden".<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Ronald Sider

❖ How is your church already pointing to non-material sources of joy and fulfillment? What more could you do?

## EDUCATING OURSELVES AS A GROUP

**Purpose: To learn about how some churches are educating people about these issues and converting to sound environmental policies.**

- ❖ Report by group member.
- ❖ Someone volunteer to give a 5 minute report on a book or an issue of his or her choice at the next meeting.
- ❖ Read and discuss the following considering what might be possible in your congregation:

## SETTING AN EXAMPLE OF SUSTAINABILITY

The 1992 Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church specifically calls on churches to set an example by adopting sound environmental policies:

"All United Methodist Churches are encouraged to be models for energy conservation by doing such things as: installing dampers in furnaces, insulating adequately all church properties, heating and lighting only rooms that are in use, using air circulation, and exploring alternative energy sources such as solar energy."<sup>4</sup>

Many churches around the country are converting their facilities in order to become environmentally benign and to set an example of sustainable living for members of their congregations and

communities. Many have had energy audits, and have followed through by increasing energy efficiency and resource conservation through upgrading church facilities. Some of these upgrades include: increasing insulation, improving air circulation using windows and/or ceiling fans, putting insulating blankets around hot water heaters, installing fluorescent lighting, installing toilet dams and faucet aerators.

Many churches now recycle office paper and Sunday bulletins. Some use recycled paper and non de-inked stationary. Instead of using disposable cups, some congregations have their members bring mugs from home and put them on a cup rack in the Fellowship Hall, rinsing out their own cup after each use. Washable cups are available for visitors. Bins for separating recyclable glass, cans, paper, plastic and even compost are available in some church kitchens.

Reducing or eliminating the use of toxics has been a focus for some churches. Some churches have eliminated or sealed asbestos. Others are using environmentally-friendly alternatives to toxic cleaning supplies, sometimes using homemade cleaners with simple ingredients such as baking soda and vinegar. When fumigation for termites, ants, fleas, or other insects need to be done, some churches are choosing companies that have non-toxic alternatives to traditional poisons.

Some churches are using alternatives to pesticides and herbicides outside as well. Some incorporate energy conservation considerations in their landscaping plans. Others plant trees, shrubs, and native plants to help sustain wildlife.

It is helpful to work within the organizational structures of the local church in order to gain consensus for sound policies. Just raising these issues and making suggestions raises people's awareness and engages them in beginning discussions about change.

## EDUCATION

Educational programs in various churches include short-term study groups on ecological issues, outside speakers coming in to give a one-time presentation, and ongoing programs to raise the awareness of congregational members about ecological issues. Some churches have educational materials in a prominent location or regular environmental articles in the monthly newsletter.

In some churches, Sunday School children are given creation-centered educational opportunities through stories, songs, crafts (such as making simple bird-feeders), planting seeds. Some churches have hosted all-church or community events to raise awareness of these issues, such as "environmental expos".

Community United Methodist Church of Wayland, Massachusetts had a study series on tropical rain forests, in which 35 children and 100 adults participated. As part of the study, they took a field trip to the Boston Museum of Science. With children's pennies and adult's contributions they collected enough money to purchase 10 acres of rainforest through the Nature Conservancy. This is an example of education combined with action.<sup>5</sup>

## DENOMINATIONAL RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES

One way that Christians can work to promote a more ecologically just world is by acting within their particular denomination to move the larger church body to greater awareness, commitment and action. The following information will describe ways to work within the denominational structures of The United Methodist Church. Groups made up of members of other denominations will need to discuss how to encourage change within their own denomination.

In The United Methodist Church, every year lay and clergy members of each Annual Conference consider and vote on resolutions on many different issues. Some Annual Conferences have passed resolutions concerning the environment. The full texts of resolutions can be found in each year's Conference Journal. Pastors and Lay Members to Annual Conference from each church have their own copies. Church offices usually have copies of past Conference Journals on hand.

Every four years at the General Conference of the United Methodist Church, resolutions are also considered. Over the years, General Conference resolutions have addressed a variety of environmental issues. The full text of these resolutions can be found in The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church. Resolutions submitted to General Conference can also have as their goal the changing of the Book of Discipline. (It would be helpful to have copies of resolutions and copies of The United Methodist Social Principles or other relevant denominational materials available at this meeting for people to look at.)

Any Conference Board, local church, or individual church member can submit a resolution to be voted upon at either Annual Conference or General Conference. Perhaps your group will come up with a resolution that could further needed commitment and change.

See the resource section at the end of this handbook for further information about denominational resources.

## PLANNING FOR ACTION

**Purpose:** *To begin the process of "converting" the church facility to being environmentally sustainable.*

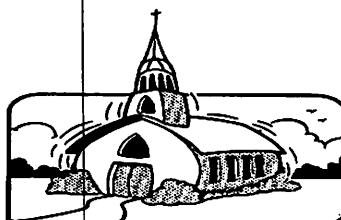
- ❖ Begin to take an "environmental audit" of your local church, using the Church Environmental Audit on the following page.
- ❖ Volunteers agree to complete the audit and report back at the next meeting.
- ❖ Brainstorm how to begin the process of conversion to an environmentally sound church building. Begin to develop a conversion plan to present to your Administrative Board or Council.
- ❖ Plan ways to help members of your church take an "environmental audit" of their homes. Plan ways to make conversion easier, perhaps through a column in the monthly church newsletter.
- ❖ Set up a Recycling Center at the church itself. Proceeds can be used for a mission project.
- ❖ Get names and addresses of agencies, congregations, or individuals within your denomination who are working on these issues, and contact them to find out what they are doing.

"We cannot have peace on Earth unless we make peace with the Earth. This is going to require every sector of human society and it will particularly require the best organized sector of society, the church."<sup>6</sup>

David Brower



# CHURCH ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE	UTILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Do you use permanent ware or plastic ware for meals at church?</li> <li>❖ Do you use styrofoam or paper cups, or washable ones at church gatherings? (A carpenter can build a cup rack in the Fellowship Hall, so that people can bring their own mugs from home)</li> <li>❖ Is office paper recycled? How about Sunday bulletins?</li> <li>❖ Does the office return junk mail? Just put a stamp on it and "return to sender".</li> <li>❖ Do you recycle aluminum, glass, plastic, and tin?</li> <li>❖ Do you sponsor rummage sales? How about toy recycling at Christmas?</li> <li>❖ Does the church offer information about local recycling to its members?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Is the heat source energy-efficient?</li> <li>❖ Is the air conditioning system energy-efficient? Could the church get by using fans and a water cooler instead of an air conditioner?</li> <li>❖ Is the church well-insulated?</li> <li>❖ Does the church have caulking and weatherstripping around the doors and windows?</li> <li>❖ Do you use energy efficient lighting, such as fluorescents?</li> <li>❖ Are your appliances energy efficient?</li> <li>❖ Do you use alternative sources of energy, such as solar power?</li> <li>❖ Is the hot water heater adequately insulated?</li> </ul>
TOXICS	WATER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Check out cleaning supplies: are they toxic or biodegradable?</li> <li>❖ How are decisions made about the use of pesticides or other poisons? Does the church have a written policy?</li> <li>❖ Are proper precautions followed when pesticides are used?</li> <li>❖ Has your church tried alternatives? (Many pesticides have harmful effects on birds, pets, or people.)</li> <li>❖ Are paints and other toxic substances disposed of properly, or tossed in the garbage?</li> <li>❖ Do you have asbestos on the outside or inside of the church building? If so, are you in compliance with the laws about how it should be contained? (Large fines can be levied if you are not, so there are several reasons to check this out.)</li> <li>❖ Do you have lead-based paint on walls where children play?</li> <li>❖ Do you use white (undyed) paper towels and napkins?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ What is the quality of your drinking water?</li> <li>❖ Do you have signs up encouraging people to conserve water?</li> <li>❖ Are there any leaks? Do the toilets conserve water?</li> </ul>
	LANDSCAPING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Do you encourage birds to come by putting out bird feeders? (Birds help control insects.)</li> <li>❖ Do you use organic ways to control insects or use chemical pesticides? (Remember, birds who eat poisoned insects are affected by the poison, too.)</li> <li>❖ Do you use organic or chemical fertilizers? Do you pull weeds by hand or use herbicides?</li> <li>❖ Do you have shade trees planted that reduce summer heat?</li> <li>❖ Do you have native plants and wildflowers growing? (This helps preserve them and provides habitat for native fauna.)</li> <li>❖ Do you have a community garden?</li> <li>❖ Do you have a compost heap for yard waste and food scraps?</li> </ul>
TRANSPORTATION	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Is carpooling to church encouraged? (Remember to include shut-ins in any plan to carpool.)</li> <li>❖ Does your church have bike racks?</li> </ul>

# Session 6

## The Church: Steward of Creation

**"The Lord God placed the human being in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it."**

**Genesis 2:15**

### BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

**Purpose:** To become aware of our responsibility as stewards of the earth in our own region.

#### SCRIPTURE

The Bible claims that all things belong to God.

**Hebrew Scriptures:** "The Earth is the Lord's and all the fullness thereof, the world, and all those who live in it." Psalm 24:1

Human beings are responsible for the wise use or misuse of all that belongs to God.

**New Testament:** "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom the master will set over the household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom the master when he comes will find so doing."

Luke 13:42-43

❖ Discuss the Christian concept of stewardship.

#### TRADITION

Christian tradition upholds the view that all things belong to God and that human beings are stewards.

"You are not the proprietor of anything. Not of one shilling in the world. You are only a steward of what another entrusts you with, to be laid out not according to your will, but His."<sup>1</sup> John Wesley

Our responsibility as stewards extends to the natural world. Listen to these words from The United Methodist Book of Resolutions:

"As stewards of the natural environment we are called to preserve and restore the very air, water, and land on which life depends. Moreover, we are called to see that all persons have a sufficient share of the resources of nature."<sup>2</sup>

❖ How can we do our part to preserve and restore the resources upon which life depends and to see that all persons have a sufficient share of resources?

#### REASON

Stewardship of the earth has to do with a right relationship between human beings and the natural world. That relationship is more of a challenge now than at any other time in human history.

"This century has witnessed dramatic changes in two key factors that define the physical reality of our relationship to the earth: a sudden and startling surge in human population, with the addition of one China's worth of people every ten years, and a sudden acceleration of the scientific and technological revolution, which has allowed an almost unimaginable magnification of our power to affect the world around us by burning, cutting, digging, moving, and transforming the physical matter that makes up the earth... Our challenge is to recognize that the startling images of environmental destruction... are symptoms of an underlying problem broader in scope and more serious than any we have ever faced. Global warming, ozone depletion, the loss of living species, deforestation — they all have a common cause: the new relationship between human civilization and the earth's natural balance."<sup>3</sup>

Albert Gore, Jr.

❖ Discuss the new relationship between human civilization and the earth's natural balance.

#### EXPERIENCE

Becoming aware of our responsibility as stewards of the earth does not happen in a vacuum, but in the context of our own location and experience. Where we are makes a difference.

When we think of our location, we often think in terms of the city, county, state, or nation where we live, but these are human-created boundaries. An ecological way of thinking about the location in which we live is to think in terms of "bioregions", ecosystems which are divided by natural bound-

aries. A "bioregion" is an area whose natural features (watershed, mountain range, forest, desert) make up a distinct ecosystem, which is interconnected with surrounding ecosystems.

Awareness of the natural features of the area where we live is important. It helps us to feel grounded in the natural world.

"Bioregional awareness teaches us in specific ways. It is not enough just to 'love nature'... Our relation to the natural world takes place in a *place*, and it must be grounded in information and experience."<sup>4</sup>

Gary Snyder

❖ Why is it important to be aware of the natural features of our bioregion? How can such awareness help us to be better stewards?

Gardening is one way to get in touch with the natural world where we live.

"Our children need to learn gardening. The reasons for this reach deep into their mental and emotional as well as into their physical survival. Gardening is an active participation in the deepest mysteries of the universe."<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Berry

❖ Why is gardening important for children? For us?

## EDUCATING OURSELVES AS A GROUP

**Purpose:** *To explore local and regional issues.*

- ❖ Report by group member.
- ❖ Someone volunteer to give a 5 minute report on a book or an issue of their choice at the next meeting.
- ❖ Read and discuss the following:

The following issues can be classified as regional. If we look at the scope of ecological damage around the world, however, we can see that regional issues have global implications. And, of course, bioregions are not really separate at all, but connected to and interrelated with surrounding bioregions. Still, identifying issues of concern in a particular region enables people to join hands with others in defending the creation in a concrete way in a particular place. This approach has great potential for motivating people, since regional issues often impact the quality of people's lives in a very real way.



## AGRICULTURE

Half of the 2.2 million farms which exist in the U.S. are expected to disappear by the year 2000, most of them family-sized farms. Farms owned by people of ethnic minorities will disappear even more quickly. A study by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission predicts that there will be no African-American-owned farms by the year 2000 if present trends continue.

These statistics represent painful human stories of farming families being forced off the land by the economic realities of our society. Richard Barnett has called this "the Latinamericanization of the United States," since many of the same factors that have forced people off the land in developing countries are also at work in the U.S. in a very real way.

If current trends continue, by the year 2000 very large farms will be producing three-quarters of the food in the U.S., in spite of the fact that there are several problems associated with such large "agribusiness" operations. They tend to use more pesticides, since they usually plant single crops (monoculture) and so do not have the plant diversity which fosters natural insect controls. Large capital investments make immediate profit essential, so in many cases the soil is depleted because crops are not rotated and soil is not left fallow. This results in the increased use of chemical fertilizers.

Federal farm programs often provide larger farms with larger benefits on the grounds that they are more efficient. But a 1985 Congressional Budget Office (CBO) study concluded "there is no persuasive efficiency argument for preferentially supporting the incomes of large farms." In fact, the CBO study found that small farms tended to have rates of return per acre that were similar to or greater than the rates of return per acre for larger farms.<sup>6</sup>

On a global scale, a major ecological concern is the loss of topsoil. Every year an estimated 24 billion tons of topsoil is lost from cropland, over and above new soil formation. In the 1980s, 240 billion tons of topsoil was lost. The ongoing loss of topsoil is a threat to the global food supply.

## TOXICS

Over 700 chemicals have been detected in drinking water in the U.S. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists 129 of these chemicals as dangerous. They include industrial solvents, metals, radioactive substances, and other chemicals, only 40 of which have been regulated.

The EPA has identified over 30,000 sites in the U.S. which have been contaminated by hazardous wastes. Cleanup has been completed on fewer than 40 of these sites.

## WETLANDS

Wetlands provide important habitat for a rich variety of species, and are especially important for migratory birds. Rapid loss of wetlands threatens the loss of many species. 90 percent of the wetlands of Australia, New Zealand, and California have been lost.

## COASTAL POLLUTION

The coastlines of the U.S. are being badly degraded. San Francisco Bay, for instance, the largest estuary in the western U.S., has lost 60 percent of its water area to land reclamation, is polluted and overrun by introduced species, and can no longer support commercial fishing. Five to ten percent of the world's coral reefs have been destroyed by pollution, and another 60 percent could be lost in the next 20 to 40 years. 70 percent of the world's beaches, many of which provide habitat for marine species, are eroding.

## DEFORESTATION

The destruction of the world's tropical forests is causing massive extinction of species. It also is causing the dislocation of Native peoples, whose livelihood for thousands of years has been based on the sustainable extraction of forest products.

Scientists have identified approximately 1.4 million species, and believe that there are 10 to 80 million more, mostly in tropical forests. But many are disappearing before science can identify them, as tropical forests are being destroyed at the rate of one acre per second. It is believed that 50 to 100 species are being lost every day. Half of the world's tropical forests are already gone, and the rest will vanish in a single human lifetime if the current rate of destruction continues.

The loss of primary temperate forests around the world also causes species extinction and loss of a sustainable livelihood for human beings. Replanting seedlings of a few species of trees cannot replace natural forest ecosystems with all their diverse variety of plant and animal species, unless the area is surrounded by primary forest containing the genetic diversity needed to help recover.

In Europe, tree stands composed of just a handful of species have replaced virtually all of Europe's original forests. In the Continental United States, less than 5 percent of primary forest is intact, most of it in the Pacific Northwest.

## DESERTIFICATION

One of the causes of famine and dislocation in the developing world today is the encroachment of deserts, caused by drought, overgrazing, deforestation and resulting soil erosion, and other human abuse of the soil. When such abuses happen near the edges of a desert, they often hasten the desert's expansion. In some places, deserts are progressing almost as quickly as glaciers once moved across the land.

"At first I thought I was fighting to save the rubber trees, then I thought I was fighting to save the Amazon Rainforest. Now I realize I am fighting for humanity."<sup>7</sup>

Chico Mendes

## PLANNING FOR ACTION

*Purpose: To plan how to be stewards of the earth in our own region.*

- ❖ As a group, take as much of the Bioregional Inventory (on the following page) as you can.
- ❖ One or more volunteers take responsibility to research the parts of the inventory that are unknown and report back at the next meeting.
- ❖ List local and/or regional environmental issues of which group members are aware.
- ❖ Group members plan to save articles about local and regional issues to share with the group.
- ❖ List local and/or regional environmental groups of which your group is aware. Then a volunteer can research whether or not there are others.
- ❖ One or more group members can volunteer to visit the meetings of other groups to find out what they are doing and to let them know about your group.



## BIOREGIONAL INVENTORY

	<b>ANIMALS</b>	<b>AGRICULTURE</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ What non-human creatures inhabit your front and back yards (or your neighborhood)? How do you co-exist with them?</li> <li>❖ Name five species of mammals that are native to your area.</li> <li>❖ Name five species of birds that are native to your area.</li> <li>❖ Name five species of birds that migrate to your area. Where do they come from? When do they arrive, where do they stay, and when do they leave?</li> <li>❖ Name five species of reptiles that are native to your area.</li> <li>❖ Name five species of amphibians that are native to your area.</li> <li>❖ Name five native insect species that are native to your area. Trace the flight paths of any migratory insects (butterflies, etc.).</li> <li>❖ List animal species that are declining in your area.</li> <li>❖ List animal species that have become extinct in your area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ How did native people subsist on the land where you live?</li> <li>❖ What foods are grown in your region?</li> <li>❖ How long is the growing season?</li> <li>❖ What is the average size farm in your region?</li> <li>❖ Are family farms being lost?</li> </ul>
	<b>PLANTS</b>	<b>TOXICS</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Identify any primary forests in your area. Identify where primary forests used to be. Identify secondary forests.</li> <li>❖ List five trees that are native to your region.</li> <li>❖ List five native wildflowers in your area.</li> <li>❖ List five edible plants that are native to your region.</li> <li>❖ List any grasses which are native to your region.</li> <li>❖ List plants or trees that are endangered or have become extinct in your area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Are businesses in your area required to trace their toxic waste stream from source to end? Where do their waste products end up?</li> <li>❖ Identify sites which are contaminated with toxics in your area. Do they qualify as Superfund Cleanup sites? To find out, contact the National Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (see "Resources")</li> <li>❖ Find out whether your area has an effective hazardous waste disposal program.</li> <li>❖ Find out if low-level nuclear waste is disposed of in your local landfill. (Yes, it is legal!)</li> </ul>
	<b>WETLANDS</b>	<b>WATER</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Identify natural and human-created wetlands.</li> <li>❖ Identify wetland areas that have been converted for development or agriculture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Where does the water you drink come from?</li> <li>❖ What is the quality of your water?</li> </ul>
		<b>UTILITIES</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Where is your electricity generated?</li> <li>❖ Where does your gas come from?</li> </ul>
		<b>WASTE</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Where does your sewage end up?</li> <li>❖ Where does your garbage end up?</li> <li>❖ If you use toxics of any kind, where do they end up?</li> </ul>

# Session 7

## The Church: Light to the Nations

"I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Isaiah 49:6

### BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

**Purpose:** To explore how the Church can be a light to the world during this time of darkness, when life on earth is threatened.

#### SCRIPTURE

God called the Israelites to be a light to the nations.

**Hebrew Scriptures:** "I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Isaiah 49:6

Likewise, the Church is called to reflect Christ's light to the world.

**New Testament:** "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16

❖ How can the Church reflect Christ's light to the world in the context of the ecological crisis?

#### TRADITION

United Methodists have traditionally been concerned, not just for their own congregations, but for the world.

"I look upon all the world as my parish".<sup>1</sup> John Wesley

Now more than ever, the world is experiencing ecological disaster. At the same time, more and more people are suffering from the effects of extreme poverty. The church is called to work with others to help to solve these global problems.

"...we are called to a global sense of community, solidarity leading to a new world system of international relationships and economic/environmental order. In this way the misery of one billion poor now living in absolute poverty can be alleviated and the living ecosystem be saved."<sup>2</sup>

United Methodist Book of Resolutions

❖ Why must the Church be involved in global issues?

#### REASON

We are part of a whole. The earth and all of God's creatures are interconnected and interdependent.

"This is us, Earth. We realize it sooner or later, but there is no getting around it. If we do not learn to live in harmony with the food chains, with the ecosystems, then gradually they will come out of balance, and then they will die. It is all a circle/cycle and we are in it; we cannot escape."<sup>3</sup>

Baden Powell

There are solutions, but the great problems faced by humankind will not be solved by individuals alone. The policies of nations will also have to change.

"The solution - at least in broad outline- is... fairly clear. The nations of the world must abandon those practices that are self-destructive in favor of what environmentalists like to call *sustainable development*'. A sustainable society is one that manages its economic growth in such a way as to do no irreparable damage to its environment. By balancing economic requirements with ecological concerns, it satisfies the needs of its people without jeopardizing the prospects of future generations."<sup>4</sup>

Philip Elmer DeWitt

How can the Church influence the practices of nations? One way is by changing people's hearts and minds, and by educating them about global issues.

- ❖ How could changing people's hearts and minds and educating them about global issues make a difference in your nation?

## EXPERIENCE

Allowing God to change our own hearts and minds is the first step in that process. That change involves opening ourselves up to the experience of our interconnectedness with the rest of the creation.

"A human being is part of the whole, called by us 'universe,' a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of our consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."<sup>5</sup>

Albert Einstein

- ❖ Why do we sometimes harden our hearts and shut out the pain of other creatures and the earth?

- ❖ How can we widen our circle of compassion?

## EDUCATING OURSELVES AS A GROUP

**Purpose:** To educate ourselves and our congregation about threats to the global environment.

- ❖ Report by a group member.
- ❖ Someone volunteer to give a five minute report on a book or an issue of their choice at the next meeting.
- ❖ Read and discuss the following global threats to the environment:

## GLOBAL WARMING

In tests to predict the likelihood of global warming due to rising atmospheric levels of Carbon Monoxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), scientists have bored two miles deep into the ice cap of Antarctica to bring up ice samples for analysis. They found that the amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> trapped in air bubbles in the different layers of ice corresponded to the climactic changes that have taken place in the earth's geologic history. Ice ages corresponded with a lowering of CO<sub>2</sub> levels and warmer periods corresponded with

higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels. The levels of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air today are higher than those in any of ice samples, and will go straight up and "off the charts" if current trends continue.

Most scientists agree that the rising atmospheric levels of CO<sub>2</sub> and other "greenhouse gasses" generated by human activity have a good chance of eventually altering the earth's climate. Those changes could be gradual, and without great effect on human lives. Or they could trigger coastal flooding, glacial melting, reduced snowpacks, interior droughts, changes in food production capabilities, erratic weather patterns, changes in ocean current activity, and more frequent and severe hurricanes. These climate changes could result in famine in different parts of the world, increased political turmoil and growing numbers of displaced people, "environmental refugees". Some people believe that some of these things have already begun to happen.

## DESTRUCTION OF THE OZONE LAYER

The stratospheric ozone layer protects us from excessive (UV) ultraviolet radiation. The EPA links skin cancer and cataracts to the thinning of the ozone layer.

The ozone hole which opens up over the Southern Hemisphere each year has been growing in size, and now covers an area *three times as big as the continental United States*. In Queensland, Australia, which is under the ozone hole, more than 75 percent of people aged 65 or older have some form of skin cancer. The law requires that children wear large hats and neck scarves to and from school to protect them from UV radiation. In Patagonia, hunters are now finding blind rabbits and fisherman are catching blind salmon.<sup>6</sup>

The protective ozone layer has also thinned over the whole world by almost 10 percent in the past forty years. For every 1 percent decrease in ozone, there is a 2 percent increase in UV radiation bathing our skin and a 4 percent increase in cases of skin cancer.

The increase in UV radiation is already reducing the productivity of phytoplankton by at least 6 to 12 percent in areas of the Southern Ocean, undermining the Antarctic food chain and its contribution to the biological pump, which drives ocean currents.

There is an international agreement in effect that will stop the production of Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) by the year 2000. That is good news. But CFCs which have already been released into the atmosphere will continue to interact with and destroy ozone for another 40 years. We do not yet know how much damage we have done by our use of CFCs.

## OVERPOPULATION

Between 1950 and 1990, the world's population grew by 2.8 billion, an average of 70 million people a year. Between 1990 and 2030, it is expected to grow by 3.6 billion, an average of 90 million per year. Albert Gore, Jr. puts it this way, "From the beginning of humanity's appearance on earth to 1945, it took more than ten thousand generations to reach a world population of two billion people. Now, in the course of one human lifetime--mine--the world population will increase from 2 to more than 9 billion, and it is already more than halfway there."<sup>7</sup>

Ninety-six percent of the projected addition of 3.6 billion people is predicted to take place in the developing world. Forces that contribute to population growth in poor countries include high rates of infant-mortality, the need of parents to be cared for in their old age by surviving children, the lack of basic needs for survival, lack of alternatives to motherhood for women, and lack of access to birth control.

In countries where there is enough to eat, basic health care (including reproductive health care), literacy, and education, population growth slows down. Raising the status of women also slows population growth. When women have educational and vocational opportunities, they bear children later and have fewer children. Developed nations such as Europe, America, Canada, Japan were able to cap family size by lowering infant-mortality rates and raising the status of women.

## THE EARTH'S CARRYING CAPACITY

High rates of population growth, consumption patterns, and technology choices have resulted in global resource depletion. This raises the issue of the earth's "carrying capacity".

After almost four decades of unprecedented growth in food harvesting from the land and sea, the world is experiencing a sudden reversal. Since 1984, global grain output per person has fallen by 11 percent. Soil erosion, air pollution, soil compaction, depletion of groundwater, the loss of topsoil, and the waterlogging and salting of irrigated land have all contributed to this problem.

After reaching an all-time high in 1989, the fish catch per person has fallen by 7 percent, due to depletion from overfishing. These downward trends are expected to continue. If so, it will lead to increasing famine, political instability, and social disintegration, like what we have seen in places like Somalia, the Sudan, and Haiti.

As food production per person falls, the nature of famine itself is changing. In the past, famine has

been concentrated in places where there are crop failures. With today's worldwide market-based food distribution system, most of the people who suffer from life-threatening malnourishment today are landless rural peasants and poor city-dwellers in the developing world. The U.N. estimates that there are now close to one billion malnourished people in the world, nearly one in five persons.

"Before I flew I was already aware of how small and vulnerable our planet is; but only when I saw it from space, in all its ineffable beauty and fragility, did I realize that humankind's most urgent task is to cherish and preserve it for future generations."<sup>8</sup> Sigmund Jahn, astronaut

## PLANNING FOR ACTION

**Purpose:** *To begin the process of "thinking globally and acting locally" to work on global issues.*

- ❖ Have members share what they found out about local environmental groups. What issues are they working on? Decide how to stay in touch with them (get on their mailing list, have one group member be a liaison to the group, etc.), so that your group can work with them to reach common goals.
- ❖ On newsprint, list global issues of most concern to the group.
- ❖ Brainstorm ways that the group can begin to work on global issues. If other local groups are working on these issues, plan to work cooperatively.
- ❖ Brainstorm ways to educate the congregation on global issues.
- ❖ Consider having a member of the group hook up to "Eco-Net", a world-wide computer network informing people of what is going on regarding environmental issues.
- ❖ Others might subscribe to newsletters or magazines to help keep the group informed.



# Session 8

# The Church: Prophet to the Nations

**"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations... "**

**Jeremiah 1:5**

## BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

**Purpose:** To explore the role of the Church in challenging the institutions of society.

### SCRIPTURE

In the Bible, *prophets* can read the signs of the times, because of their close relationship with God. They warn the people to repent and change their ways before it is too late. They challenge nations and kings.

**Hebrew Scriptures:** "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations... See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

Jeremiah 1:5,10

Likewise, as Christians we are called to struggle against evil that goes beyond the struggle with our own personal sin.

**New Testament:** "For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God..." Ephesians 5:11-13a

❖What does it mean to struggle against rulers and authorities, cosmic powers and spiritual forces of evil in the context of the ecological crisis?

### TRADITION

One of the distinctive features of United Methodism is the dual emphases of personal spirituality and social concern. The church is called to foster growth in holiness of heart and life among individuals, and also to work for social reform.

"The goal of the Methodist Societies is to reform the nation, particularly the Church and spread scriptural holiness throughout the land."<sup>1</sup>

John Wesley

The Church influences public policy, either by its silent assent or by its active participation. The Church's role in relation to the institutions of society should be to challenge policies that are harmful and to actively promote policies that foster well-being and life.

"The Church should continually exert a strong ethical influence upon the state, supporting policies and programs deemed to be just and compassionate and opposing policies and programs which are not."<sup>2</sup>

United Methodist Social Principles

❖Do you have reservations about the Church getting involved in issues that at times become political? Is there an alternative?

### REASON

Many national and international policies work against both justice and sustainability. It should not be surprising then, that the environment is being depleted and that the living conditions of the poor continue to worsen.

"There is something fundamentally wrong in treating the earth as if it were a business in liquidation."<sup>3</sup>

Herman Daly

The Church has a moral responsibility to challenge nations, corporations, and international economic, social, and political institutions to adopt policies which foster a just and sustainable world. Changes in these areas will not come easily.

"To bring about meaningful change in most of these areas would require overhauling the way the world does business- from the laws that control international trade to the financial institutions that direct the ebb and flow of capital."<sup>4</sup>

Philip Elmer DeWitt

- ❖ Do you think such major change is possible? What would it take?

## EXPERIENCE

Because our institutions need to be overhauled in such a major way, it is easy for people to feel powerless.

"Perhaps the most serious threat... is that so many people have come to feel that the process of change in which we are now swept up has gone so far and gained so much momentum that it has outstripped our capacity to affect it. They fear that forces beyond our control now guide our destiny... The institutions of government and the systems with which we make choices about the future are indeed unwieldy, but in order to redeem the promise of democratic government, we must make all these institutions more accountable. Those still mired in the past must be swept forward and changed- despite their inertia."<sup>5</sup> Albert Gore, Jr.

As difficult as the task seems, with God all things are possible. Those of us who can read the signs of the times are called on to warn people and to challenge the powers of this world to change before it is too late.

- ❖ Does your faith empower you to work for change?
- ❖ How can the Church help change governments and other institutions?

## EDUCATING OURSELVES AS A GROUP

**Purpose:** To see that some public policies need to be changed.

- ❖ Report by group member.
- ❖ Someone volunteer to give a five minute report on a book or an issue of his or her choice at the next meeting.
- ❖ Read and discuss the following:

## NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In the United States, developers and big businesses contribute heavily to local, state, and national elections, leaving elected officials indebted to their contributors. Tax dollars subsidize below-cost sales of virgin timber, harmful grazing practices, mining, road-building, irrigation for

agribusiness, biased public utilities programs, pesticide production, and many other programs that work against sustainability. The U.S. government spends billions of dollars supporting environmentally unsound practices. There are comparatively few subsidies for programs which foster environmentally sound practices such as recycling, alternative energy sources, or alternative transportation.

## INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

International economic policies are similarly skewed in favor of exploitation of the earth. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, usually favor large development projects, rather than small-scale projects which rely on what has come to be called "appropriate technology." The World Bank loans money to governments of developing nations for these large-scale projects, which often are harmful to the environment and to the poor. These loans often result in debt repayment problems.

The world debt crisis, in turn, creates pressures on nations to exploit their natural resources in order to gain cash to pay the interest on their debt. When nations seek to refinance their debt in order to be able to continue paying the interest, the World Bank imposes "austerity measures." Social programs are cut back in the poorest of countries, so that the governments can continue making interest payments on the debt. Thus, the cycle of environmental destruction and human misery continues.

One example is the Tucurui Dam, which was constructed in the Amazon Rainforest and funded by the World Bank. It displaced 25,000 people and submerged 900 square miles. The Brazilian government plans to construct at least 125 more dams to bring electricity and industry to the Amazon Rainforest. They will flood 9 million square kilometers of tropical forest, and displace more than 500,000 people.

Brazil already has a \$108 billion foreign debt, and pays a sizeable percentage of its GNP each year just in interest. Some people are calling for some portion of the world debt to be "forgiven". Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga of Brazil has said of his country's debt, "To collect the debt is sin. To pay the debt is sin... The debt has already been collected in the blood of Brazilians."<sup>6</sup>

One hopeful sign in international relations is the increasing cooperation among nations through the United Nations. UN programs for human well-being and environmentally sustainable development are promising, and will be discussed more in the next session.

## TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

Transnational Corporations (TNCs) are institutions which have grown tremendously in the scope of their activity and in their ability to impact people's lives. Since some of the world's major corporations are truly trans-national, they have no one country to which they are fully accountable. This enables them to take full advantage of the incentives of various countries to maximize their profits and to keep their expenses and taxes at a minimum.

While some TNCs have adopted various just and environmentally sound policies voluntarily, there are pressures which work against that happening. While there are ethical and concerned people in positions of authority in many TNCs, the primary goal of such corporations is to make a profit. The average length of tenure for CEOs of major corporations is just five years. They must show a profit, or they are out of a job! Such pressure to show short term profits work against policies which support long term environmental sustainability and human well being.

Because of their knowledge and connections with countries around the world, TNCs can take advantage of cheap labor and resources. The World Bank often requires nations who want to refinance their debt to have an "Open Door Policy" to TNCs, but TNC investment in poor countries often results in capital flight (more money leaving the country than going into the country), resource extraction, pollution, and loss of local businesses which can't compete with the TNCs. U.S. foreign policy supports the expansion of U.S. based TNCs into other countries. Protecting U.S. national interests can mean protecting the interests of U.S. TNCs.

There are several resources which give specific information about various TNCs. People can use them to become informed and use what purchasing power they have to move the world's major corporations toward adopting just and sustainable policies and practices. People in various countries can also work to get their governments to set limits on the activities of TNCs within their borders, in order to protect the people and the environment.

"We must ensure the existence of the greatest possible diversity and variety of life on earth. We must challenge the right of nations, human institutions, and individuals to engage in activities which impair the long-term well being of other human beings, other species, or the environments on which they all depend."<sup>7</sup>

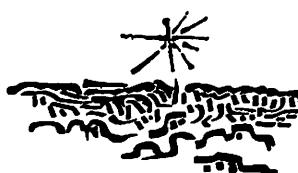
Raymond Dasmann

## PLANNING FOR ACTION

**Purpose:** To explore how the Church can affect public policies to help bring about a just and sustainable world.

- ❖ List ways that group members could influence public policy as individuals or as a group. (letter writing, phone calls, speaking, lobbying, etc.).
- ❖ A volunteer can look up the names, addresses and phone numbers of elected local, state and national officials to complete the list on the following page before the next meeting.
- ❖ Brainstorm and list issues around which the group might organize a congregational letter-writing campaign. Choose one issue that the group feels could have broad congregational support, and plan the campaign. (newsletter article, planned letter writing time after church, etc.)
- ❖ If election time is coming up, will there be issues on the ballot which the committee supports? If so, the group can promote them. (Churches cannot endorse candidates without endangering their non-profit status, but they can promote initiatives and issues.)
- ❖ Read the following statement from the United Methodist Social Principles. Discuss the role of non-violent direct action in bringing about change in public policy. When is it appropriate?

"...We recognize the right of individuals to dissent when acting under the constraint of conscience and, after having exhausted all legal recourse, to disobey laws which they deem to be unjust or laws which are discriminately enforced. Even then, respect for law should be shown by refraining from violence and by accepting the costs of disobedience."<sup>8</sup>
- ❖ Under what circumstances or for what issue might group members be willing to risk arrest or support someone who chose to do so?
- ❖ A volunteer can research corporations to be supported because of their just and sustainable policies.



## Federal, State and Local Government Officials

President Bill Clinton  
Executive Office of the President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500  
(202) 456-1414

Vice-President Al Gore  
Office of the Vice-President  
Old Executive Office Building  
Washington, DC 20501  
(202) 456-2326

Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121

Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121

Representative \_\_\_\_\_  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121

Representative Thomas P. Foley  
Speaker of The House  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121

Representative Richard Gephardt  
House Majority Leader  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121

Representative Newt Gingrich  
House Minority Leader  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121

Senator George Mitchell  
Senate Majority Leader  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121

Senator Bob Dole  
Senate Minority Leader  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121

Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240  
(202) 208-3171

Council on Environmental Quality  
722 Jackson Place NW  
Washington, DC 20503  
(202) 395-5750

Environmental Protection Agency  
401 M Street SW  
Washington, DC 20240  
(202) 208-3171

Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9  
75 Hawthorne Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
(415) 744-1500

Governor \_\_\_\_\_

State Senator \_\_\_\_\_

State Assembly Representative \_\_\_\_\_

State Senate Majority Leader \_\_\_\_\_

State Senate Minority Leader \_\_\_\_\_

State Assembly Majority Leader \_\_\_\_\_

State Assembly Minority Leader \_\_\_\_\_

County Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

City Council Member \_\_\_\_\_

## NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

<b>American Farmland Trust</b> 1920 N Street, NW #400 Washington, DC 20036 202/659-5170	<b>Environmental Law Institute</b> 1616 P Street, NW, #200 Washington, DC 20036 202/328-5150	<b>National Wildlife Federation</b> 1400 16th Street, NW Washington, DC 20036 202/797-6800
<b>American Forestry Association</b> 1516 P Street, NW Washington, DC 20005 202/667-3300	<b>Friends of the Earth</b> 1025 Vermont Avenue, NW Suite 300 Washington, DC 20005 202/783-7400	<b>Natural Resources Defense Council</b> 40 West 20th Street New York, NY 10011 212/727-2700
<b>Audubon Society (Govt. Relations)</b> 666 Pennsylvania Ave., SE Washington, DC 20003 202/547-9009	<b>Greenpeace</b> 1436 U Street, NW, Box 3720 Washington, DC 20009 202/462-1177	<b>Nature Conservancy</b> 1815 N Lynn Street Arlington, VA 22209 703/841-5300
<b>Center for Marine Conservation</b> 1725 DeSales Street, NW Washington, DC 20036 202/429-5609	<b>International Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture</b> 1710 University Avenue, SE #202 Minneapolis, MN 55414	<b>Union of Concerned Scientists</b> 2 Brattle Square Cambridge, MA 02238-9130 617/547-5552
<b>Citizen's Clearinghouse For Hazardous Waste</b> PO Box 6806 Falls Church, VA 22040 703/237-2249	<b>International Wildlife Coalition</b> 320 Gifford Street Falmouth, MA 02540 508/548-8328	<b>Western Shoshone National Council</b> PO Box 64 Duckwater, NV 89314
<b>Conservation International</b> 1015 18th Street, NW Suite 1000 Washington, DC 20036 202/429-5660	<b>League of Conservation Voters</b> 1707 L Street, NW, Suite 550 Washington, DC 20036	<b>Wilderness Society</b> 900 17th Street, NW Washington, DC 20006 202/833-2300
<b>Co-Op America</b> 1612 K Street, NW, Suite 600 Washington, DC 20006 202/872-5307 Washington, DC 20036	<b>Mothers &amp; Others for Pesticide Limits</b> 40 West 20th Street New York, NY 10010 212/242-0100	<b>Worldwatch Institute</b> 1776 Massachusetts Ave, NW Washington, DC 20036 202/452-1999
<b>Council on Economic Priorities</b> 30 Irving Place New York, NY 10003 212/420-1133	<b>National Arbor Day Foundation</b> 100 Arbor Avenue Nebraska City, NE 68410	<b>World Wildlife Fund</b> 1250 24th Street, NW Washington, DC 20037 202/293-4800
<b>Defenders of Wildlife</b> 1101 14th Street NW, Suite 1400 Washington, DC 20005 202/682-9400	<b>National Audubon Society</b> 950 Third Avenue New York, NY 10022 212/546-9100	<b>Zero Population Growth</b> 1400 16th Street, NW Suite 320 Washington, DC 20036 202/332-2200
<b>Earth First!</b> PO Box 5871 Tucson, AZ 85703	<b>National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides</b> 701 E Street, SE Washington, DC 20003 202/543-5450	
<b>Environmental Defense Fund</b> 257 Park Avenue South New York, NY 10010 212/505-2100	<b>National Parks &amp; Conservation Association</b> 1015 31st Street, NW Washington, DC 20007 202/223-6722	

## Session 9

# The Church: Community of Hope

**"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."**

**Romans 15:13**

## BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

**Purpose:** To explore the role of the Church in keeping hope alive in the context of the ecological crisis.

### SCRIPTURE

The Hebrew Scriptures contain many passages of hope for the future. Read the following beautiful words of hope:

**Hebrew Scriptures:** "Thus says the Lord God: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the towns to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. The land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden'..." Ezekiel 36:31

The vision of the New Creation is a positive image of hope that is found in both the Old and New Testaments.

**New Testament:** "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now..." Romans 8:19-22

### TRADITION

Our traditions also contain themes of hope for the future of the world.

"The world and everything in it is to be brought under the lordship of Christ, not destroyed, but redeemed."<sup>1</sup>

John Wesley

Read the following words from the United Methodist Social Creed:

"We believe in the present and final triumph of God's Word in human affairs, and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the world."<sup>2</sup>

❖ Can our scriptures and traditions help us to remain hopeful in spite of the many negative images of destruction and suffering that we see so often? If so, how?

### REASON

Christian teachings must be judged partly on the basis of their effects. We can examine certain teachings and think through what the effects of such teachings might be.

There has been renewed interest in the Christian teachings about the future of the creation, probably to some degree because of the threats to life on earth. Doomsday "prophets", focusing on the apocalyptic themes in the Scriptures, claim that we are living in the "Last Days", and predict that the inevitable end is near.

This deterministic teaching is a dangerous distortion of the biblical message. And in fact, these dire predictions could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, because such teachings divert people's attention away from what needs to be done to solve our global problems. If people believe that the end of life on earth is inevitable, what would motivate them to work for a better world? It is reasonable to assume that they might withdraw from the struggle to work for the future, and instead focus on trying to "save" people out of this hopeless situation here on earth.

To counter these fatalistic teachings and to instill Christian people with hope, our churches must revive the biblical themes of the coming Reign of God and the New Creation, strong themes throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Hope for the future can help to provide motivation to work for a better world. Consider the following

words based on the teachings of a renowned theologian, Jurgen Moltmann:

"God's promise is not for another world, but for the new creation of *this* world, in all its material and worldly reality. The whole of creation... will be transformed in God's new creation. Christian [hope] is therefore the hope that the world will be different... Because it is hope for the future of this world, its effect is to show present reality to be *not yet* what it can and will be. The world is seen as transformable in the direction of the promised future. In this way believers are liberated from accommodation to the status quo, and set critically against it."<sup>3</sup>

- ❖ Does your hope in God motivate you to work for the good of the earth and its people? If so, how?
- ❖ Does your hope for world transformation set you critically against the status quo? If so, how?

### EXPERIENCE

As Christians, we experience hope even in the face of death, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We also have hope for the future of this earth, hope for our descendants, hope that life on earth will continue to glorify God.

"This is our hope; that the children born today may still have, twenty years hence, a bit of green grass under their bare feet, a breath of clean air to breathe, a patch of blue water to sail upon, and a whale on the horizon to set them dreaming."<sup>4</sup>

Jacques Cousteau

- ❖ What is your hope for the future of this world?

### EDUCATING OURSELVES AS A GROUP

**Purpose:** To explore signs of hope for the future of the world.

- ❖ Report by group member.
- ❖ Someone volunteer to give a five minute report on a book or an issue of his or her choice at the next meeting.
- ❖ Read and discuss the following:

There are many signs of hope for the future.

### APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

Environmentally-friendly technology can help humankind move toward sustainable living. Making such technology available to developing countries could help them "leap-frog" over some of the destruction that industrialization has caused in the developed world.

Technology is already available that can double automobile fuel economy, triple the efficiency of lighting systems, and cut typical heating requirements by 75 percent. New technologies will allow even greater gains in efficiency.

The potential of renewable energy resources has hardly begun to be tapped. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, every year enough useable renewable resources flow into the U.S. to supply 250 times the country's annual use of energy. Solar technologies which allow us to harness the energy of the sun are already available.

### INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In July, 1992, representatives of 178 nations attended the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro to discuss and come to agreement about what needs to be done to preserve the global environment and to help poorer nations find ways to develop in environmentally sustainable ways. It was the first time so many government representatives had gathered for any purpose, which shows that governments are realizing how urgent and important these issues are. There were also thousands of delegates from Non-Governmental Organizations (environmental groups, corporations, churches, etc.) from all over the world including the United Methodist delegation.

In the document signed by the nations which had attended the Summit, there was basic agreement on several important issues:

1. There will need to be international cooperation to solve environmental problems.
2. The problems of poverty and ecological destruction both need to be tackled if either is going to be successful.
3. The richer nations will have to help fund programs to bring about a sustainable world.

The fact that so many governments now realize that our futures are intertwined is hopeful, indeed. Will that fact in itself make a difference? Not quickly enough.

## CITIZEN ACTION

In countries all over the world, people are organizing to help save the environment and to bring about justice for people. During the United Nations Conference, thousands of representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations came to Rio from all over the world. They gathered to discuss problems, solutions, and actions related to the problems we have been discussing. Perhaps the connections made among these individuals was even more important than the official decisions that were made. Citizen's groups have power to shape official policies in their home countries, and to influence international policies.

In the past few decades, there has been an amazing increase in the numbers and activity of non-governmental organizations around the world. Groups such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Worldwide Fund for Nature, and countless others have organized around various issues of concern and are supported by people around the world. Computer networks enable groups to stay in close communication and give them almost immediate access to the latest available information related to their area of concern.

Of course, one important Non-Governmental Organization is the Church. In Session Five we discussed some ways to move the church toward becoming more active in working for the good of the earth and its people. This will be our ongoing challenge.

The extent of international cooperation depends to a great degree on what the *people* of the world decide to do. What is our commitment? What will we do, as members of the Universal Church of Jesus Christ?

"Whether Israel or the Church, the vocation is the same: to witness to God's hope for *all* by living as *communities of visibly redeemed creation*. The believing community is to display in its own life the justice-doing and peacemaking of God. It is to be an anticipatory community of creation-made-new, a taste or aperitif of the reign of God. Differently said, it is to be a restored society."<sup>5</sup>

Larry L. Rasmussen

## PLANNING FOR ACTION

**Purpose:** To plan ways to kindle hope in ways that motivate people to work for the future of the earth and its people.

❖ Brainstorm together about the changes that are needed (such as better public transportation, development of solar power, etc.). Then discuss how the group could help bring some of those changes about.

❖ Invite someone who is working on a concrete project that will benefit the environment to give a presentation at your church, perhaps after a congregational potluck.

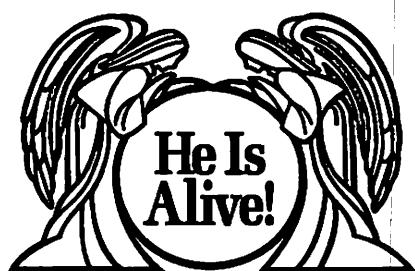
❖ Brainstorm things that your group could do that would make people feel hopeful about the possibilities for change.

Discuss the following suggestions:

❖ Have an ecology fair at the church. Invite local environmental and justice groups to put up booths. It could even serve as a fundraiser for your group's projects.

❖ Design a skit, a creative reading, or a program using mimes or clowns, based on a Bible passage or the current situation. It could be shared during worship and then taken "on the road" to other churches or to community environmental events.

❖ Art can help us to get in touch with our creative energies. Covenant together to find a creative way to celebrate life before the next meeting. Suggestions are: drawing, dancing, drumming, singing.



# Session 10

## The Church: Covenant Community

**"You are the descendants of the prophets and of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors..."**

**Acts 3:25a**

### BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

**Purpose:** *To explore what it means to be in a covenantal relationship with God at this time in history.*

#### SCRIPTURE

Long ago, during a time of ecological crisis, God commanded Noah to preserve the diversity of life on earth by taking the different species with him into the ark. The earliest covenant between God and human beings extended to every living creature.

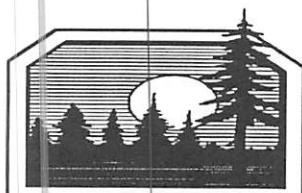
**Hebrew Scriptures:** "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations. I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.... When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."      Genesis 9:12,14-15

As Christians, we are participants in the New Covenant through our faith in Jesus Christ. Like our ancestors in the Jewish faith, we are blessed that we may be a blessing to others.

**New Testament:** "You are the descendants of the prophets and of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors, saying to Abraham, `and in your descendants all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"      Acts 3:25

❖ What does it mean to be in a covenant relationship with God?

❖ How are we blessed that we may be a blessing to others?



#### TRADITION

It is essential that people realize that we are all interrelated. Consider the following words from the United Methodist Social Principles:

"God's world is one world. The unity now being thrust upon us by the technological revolution has far outrun our moral and spiritual capacity to achieve a stable world. The enforced unity of humanity, increasingly evident on all levels of life, presents the Church as well as all people with problems that will not wait for answer: injustice, war, exploitation, privilege, population, international ecological crisis, proliferation of arsenals of nuclear weapons, development of transnational business organizations that operate beyond the effective control of any governmental structure, and the increase of tyranny in all its forms. This generation must find viable answers to these and related questions if humanity is to continue on this earth. We commit ourselves, as a Church, to the achievement of a world community that is a fellowship of persons who honestly love one another."<sup>1</sup>

❖ Why is it essential now more than ever before that we work for the achievement of a true world community?

#### REASON

As we think through our choices at this critical time in history, we must consider not only ourselves, but other creatures and future generations.

"We are in fact conducting a massive, unprecedented -some say unethical- experiment. As we contemplate a choice between adapting to the changes we are causing and preventing those changes, we should bear in mind that our choice will bind not only ourselves but our grandchildren and their grandchildren as well."<sup>2</sup> Albert Gore, Jr.

God's covenant extends to all creatures and to future generations. Faithfulness to that covenant

requires that we also include all creatures and future generations in our circle of concern and care.

"The basic value of a sustainable society,... the ecological equivalent of the Golden Rule, is simple: each generation should meet its needs without jeopardizing the prospects of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>3</sup> State of the World, 1991

❖ What would this understanding of the "Golden Rule" involve if we took it seriously?

## EXPERIENCE

Our sense of commitment to future generations and to God's creation can motivate us to action.

"I cannot stand the thought of leaving my children with a degraded earth and a diminished future".<sup>4</sup>

Albert Gore, Jr.

❖ How can our deep sense of commitment move us to work to preserve the earth for future generations?

## EDUCATING OURSELVES AS A GROUP

**Purpose:** To explore the value of Christian covenant communities in the context of the eco-justice crisis.

❖ Report by group member.

❖ Read and discuss the following:

Small communities of faithful people living out of a vision of hope for the future, calling social, economic, and political institutions to account, could have a profound effect on the world. Such groups are already functioning in different ways around the world.

## CHRISTIAN BASE COMMUNITIES

Christian Base Communities are small communities of believing Christians in developing countries, especially in Latin America, who seek to practice radical obedience to Jesus Christ. It is estimated that there are approximately 30,000 such communities in Brazil alone.

Members of these small groups meet together regularly to pray, study the Bible, and organize to help their communities. Such community work may include literacy campaigns, health care work, development of food or craft cooperatives, sustain-

able gardening programs or worker advocacy campaigns. Some are persecuted for working on behalf of the poor and oppressed. Willingness to suffer for the sake of the gospel is a hallmark of the people in these communities. Such faith and commitment arises out of the people's experiences of poverty, powerlessness, and oppression, and their hope in the God who promises freedom and justice.

The number of such groups has grown enormously during the past two decades, and the impact of this movement has been felt around the world. Liberation theology has strongly influenced mainline theology, with its themes of personal responsibility and empowerment, God's promise of freedom and justice, and the "good news to the poor" proclaimed by Jesus.

## COVENANT DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Small groups called "Class Meetings" have historically gathered together in The United Methodist Church for the sake of spiritual growth, Bible Study, and accountability. Small groups based on the model of Class Meetings are being revived at this time through Covenant Discipleship Groups. These are small groups of people within a congregation who meet together on a regular basis for mutual support and accountability, as they seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

Each Covenant Discipleship Group puts together its own covenant, based on the leading of the Spirit. Covenants typically include a commitment to spiritual growth through the practice of spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, and communal worship, as well as a commitment to faithful action in the outer world. Some existing Covenant Discipleship Groups already have a commitment to some form of environmental responsibility written into their covenants. Listen to these words from Accountable Discipleship: Handbook for Covenant Discipleship Groups:

"The early Methodist class meeting [was] such an important paradigm for Christian discipleship... It was the genius of the Methodist movement in Wesley's day, and is perhaps the most important contribution Methodism can make to the contemporary world church."<sup>5</sup>

## ALTERNATIVE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

There are alternative Christian communities around the United States who practice radical discipleship while living in community, sharing resources, meeting together for worship and prayer,

and joining together to be in service and witness. Sojourners Community in Washington, D.C., is one such community. Its members participate in various ministries in the inner city neighborhood in which they live and in the larger community, while speaking out prophetically on social issues. They publish a monthly magazine which addresses national and international issues dealing with peace, justice, and environmental concerns.

Other groups, often connected with specific churches, have powerful and prophetic ministries which address the spiritual needs of people as well as the needs of the world. Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C. encourages a strong commitment to discipleship on the part of all people who join the church. They, too, have been involved in a broad spectrum of ministries. In the 1980s, they organized a group called *World Peacemakers*, which became a model for such groups around the country. It involved the group meeting together each week, spending time working on both the *inner journey* of reflection and the *outer journey* of action.

Christians organize themselves in many different ways for mutual support and shared ministry. In what way will your group organize itself? Where will your group go from here?

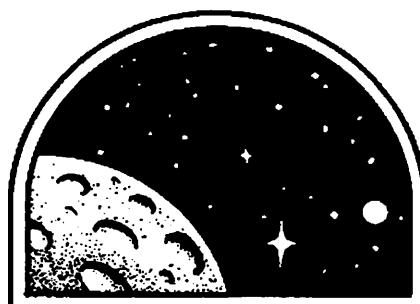
"There are three interrelated aspects of the work of such local communities. One is shaping the personal therapies, spiritualities, and corporate liturgies by which we nurture and symbolize a new biophilic consciousness. Second, there is the utilization of local institutions over which we have some control, our homes, schools, churches, farms, and locally controlled businesses, as pilot projects of ecological living. Third, there is the building of organizational networks that reach out regionally, nationally, and internationally, in a struggle to change the power structures that keep the present death system in place."<sup>6</sup>

Rosemary Radford Ruether

## PLANNING FOR ACTION

**Purpose:** *To plan where the group goes from here.*

- ❖ Discuss how group members feel about this study which they are about to complete.
- ❖ Review how group members are doing on personal lifestyle issues.
- ❖ Review how the conversion of the church facility is going.
- ❖ Review efforts made by the group to begin educating the congregation and reaching out to the community and world.
- ❖ Discuss where people would like the group to go from here. One possibility would be for group meetings to continue to include reflection, education, and action. Resources at the back of this handbook or other resources could be used. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the group would decide its particular emphasis.
- ❖ If the group decides to continue on with a similar format, decide who will be the group's Chairperson or facilitator. Each section could have a different leader, or there could be a rotating leadership.
- ❖ Decide which issues the group would like to learn more about. Prioritize. Then decide how to continue the ongoing process of group education (reports by members, work from a study guide, read a book as a group, take turns sharing on certain issues, etc.).
- ❖ Brainstorm action ideas, listing on newsprint. Prioritize. Decide on a plan for action(s). These may be a continuation of what the group has already started and/or new actions.
- ❖ If the group decides to continue, consider designing a covenant for members which incorporates spiritual disciplines, lifestyle goals, continuing education, and action.





# Resources

## UNITED METHODIST DENOMINATIONAL RESOURCES

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (Nashville, Tennessee: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), p.67. The basic book explaining the structure, doctrine, and Social Principles of the U.M.C.

Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church (Nashville, Tennessee: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), p.67. Contains resolutions passed at United Methodist General Conferences.

Caretakers of God's Gifts: The Program Guide for United Methodist Women 1992 (General Board of Global Ministries, Women's Division). An excellent study guide for women on eco-justice issues.

U.S. Agricultural and Rural Communities in Crisis, Rev. Melvin E. West (Columbus, OH: The National United Methodist Rural Fellowship, 1990). An excellent six-session study guide for Rural, Urban, and Sub-Urban Churches.

"Creation's Caretakers," a 26-minute videotape that explores the theological grounds for the religious community's advocacy on eco-justice for family farms, rural communities, and the environment. Order from the General Board of Church and Society, Service Department, 100 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002, or call 1-800-967-0880. Complete catalogue of United Methodist Board of Church and Society publications available at this number.

"101 Ways to Help Save the Earth," a 35-page guide that gives 101 ways individuals can change their daily habits for environmental stewardship. Includes 52 weeks of congregational activities. \$5 each, 100 or more \$3 each. Order from General Board of Church and Society Service Department, listed above.

"Creation in Crisis: Responding to God's Covenant", book by Shantilal P. Bhagat on the state of the earth. Calls persons of faith to study and action. \$9.95 each. Order from General Board of Church and Society Service Department, listed above.

"For Our Children: Protecting Creation From Poison", a 25-minute video (with study guide and accompanying packet of resources) on community

and church involvement in fighting toxic pollution. Cost is \$25. Study guide alone is \$3. Order from General Board of Church and Society Service Department, listed above.

"Social Principles--The United Methodist Church", a reprint of the Social Principles from the 1992 Book of Discipline in booklet form. Cost for 1-9 is 35 cents; 10-99, 30 cents; 100 or more, 25 cents. Order from General Board of Church and Society Service Department, listed above.

Accountable Discipleship: Handbook for Covenant Discipleship Groups in the Congregation, by David Lowes Watson (Nashville, Tennessee: Discipleship Resources, 1984). Reviews the history of Covenant Groups, explains their rationale and outlines a structure to be used in similar groups today.

## NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES RESOURCE

"God's Earth Our Home: A Resource for Congregational Study and Action on Environmental and Economic Justice", by the Environmental and Economic Justice Hunger Concerns Working Group of the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A., 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115. Order from faithQuest, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120, (800) 441-3712. An excellent packet of resources and a study guide for churches.

## ECOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

Cry of the Environment: Rebuilding the Christian Creation Tradition (Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Company, 1984). A Project of the Center for Ethics and Social Policy of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA. Valuable essays about the ecological crisis from well-known theologians with a variety of theological perspectives.

Tending the Garden: Essays on the Gospel and the Earth, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987). A collection of essays which relate concern and responsibility for the earth to Christian faith.

Hope For the Land: Nature in the Bible, by Richard Cartwright Austin (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988). Excellent discussion of many biblical passages which focus on the natural world.

# Resources

The Environment and the Christian: What Can We Learn from the New Testament?, Calvin B. De Witt (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991). A collection of essays that approach the ecological crisis from a New Testament perspective.

After Nature's Revolt: Eco-Justice and Theology, edited by Dieter Hessel (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1992). Essays by several renowned theologians, including John B. Cobb, Jr. and H. Paul Santmire, discussing the ecological crisis from a theological perspective.

Beauty of the Lord: Awakening the Senses, by Richard Cartwright Austin (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988). How to integrate our understanding of God and our place in the world by awakening our senses to natural beauty.

Redeeming the Creation: The Rio Earth Summit, Challenges to the Churches, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992). Challenges churches to respond to the issues and outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development that was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Ecological Healing: A Christian Vision, Nancy G. Wright and Donald Kill (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993.) A very readable book that is informative, relating issues of ecology and poverty. Discusses Indigenous people and the earth. Offers statements on ecology from different world religions.

## THE UNIVERSE

Cosmos as Creation: Theology and Science in Consonance, edited by Ted Peters (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989). Essays by scientists and theologians exploring significant topics on the frontier of science and theology, including the big-bang theory, the second law of thermodynamics, relativity, creationism, and ecology.

"Fate of the Earth", an audiotape in which Sr. Miriam McGillis introduces the "New Story" of the universe that has been revealed by science, and discusses its profound significance. Other resources and tapes by McGillis, Thomas Berry, and others are available through Global Perspectives, P.O. Box 925, Sonoma, CA 95476.

The Dream of the Earth, Father Thomas Berry, CP (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1988). Social and ecological issues in a historical and cosmic context, pointing a direction into the future. Thomas Berry has much to say to us about the implications of the emerging story of the cosmos.

Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation Between Humans and the Earth, Thomas Berry, SP and Thomas Clarke, JS (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1992). A compelling dialogue between two Catholic priest-theologians about the breakdown of our socio-economic systems and the ecology of the planet, with a focus on the way forward to a new life-sustaining community.

The New Faith-Science Debate: Probing Cosmology, Technology, and Theology, edited by John M. Mangum (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress, 1989). Scientists and theologians discussing the Christian faith and the scientific world view.

Jesus and the Cosmos, by Denis Edwards (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1989). The story of the cosmos, the story of Jesus, and how they are connected.

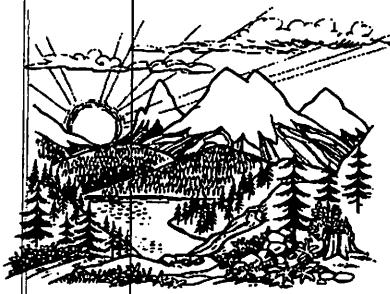
## CREATION-CENTERED WORSHIP MATERIALS

Caring For God's Creation, The Rev. Peter G. Moore-Kochlacs & Friends (Reseda, CA: Environmental Ministries, 1993). A collection of environmentally focused resource materials, including sermons. Other resources and a newsletter are also available: Environmental Ministries, 7528 Garden Grove Avenue, Reseda, CA 91335.

The United Methodist Rural Fellowship has a variety of worship resources and other materials. For information: The UMRF Field Office, 108 Balow Wynd, Columbia, MO. 65203. (314)445-9397.

Thinking Like a Mountain: Toward a Council of All Beings (Santa Cruz, CA: New Society Publishers, 1988). Articles from the perspective of deep ecology. Contains poems, especially Joanna Macy's "Bestiary", which can be used in worship.

# Resources

LIFESTYLE ISSUES	GLOBAL ISSUES
<p><u>Freedom of Simplicity</u>, by Richard J. Foster (Harper and Row). Makes a strong case, based on biblical principles, for simple living and gives specific and detailed practical suggestions.</p> <p><u>Celebrating Holidays and Rites of Passage</u> (Ellenwood, Georgia: Alternatives, 1988). Full of information about the origins of holidays and celebrations. Contains many practical suggestions for resisting overconsumption and for celebrating in life-sustaining ways. Other valuable materials are also available from Alternatives.</p> <p><u>Diet for a New America: How Your Food Choices Affect Your Health, Happiness, and the Future of Life on Earth</u>, John Robbins (Walpole, NH: Stillpoint Publishing, 1987). Makes a strong case for a grain-based diet, based on personal health, the inherent dignity of animals, and the shocking abuses of the factory farming industry.</p>	<p><u>Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit</u> (New York, NY: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1992), by Albert Gore. Provides an excellent and comprehensive overview of the global threat to the environment. It also contains theological reflection and practical proposals for personal responsibility and structural change.</p> <p><u>State of the World, 1994: A Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress Toward a Sustainable Society</u>, Lester Brown et al. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton &amp; Company, Inc., 1994). These book-length reports have been published each year for several years. They give a well-documented overview of major ecological problems, and suggest concrete solutions. Past issues can also be ordered. Each one is full of invaluable information.</p> <p>Lester Brown et al., <u>Vital Signs, 1992: The Trends That Are Shaping Our Future</u>, (New York: W.W. Norton &amp; Company, 1992). A book that with the help of charts, graphs, and one-page summaries, describes the trends of key ecological indicators. From Worldwatch Institute.</p>
<p><b>CONVERTING THE CHURCH</b></p> <p><u>A Directory of Environmental Activities and Resources in the North American Religious Community, Summer 1992</u> (Joint Appeal by Religion and Science for the Environment) (Kutztown, Pennsylvania: Kutztown Publishing Company, 1992). This manual tells what some churches are doing and lists groups and resources that are available to help.</p>	<p><u>Saving the Planet: How to Shape An Environmentally Sustainable Global Economy</u>, (New York: W.W. Norton &amp; Company, 1992). All of their publications are excellent. This one focuses on changes that need to be made. From Worldwatch Institute.</p>
<p><b>BIOREGIONAL AWARENESS</b></p> <p><u>Home! A Bioregional Reader</u>, Van Andruess et al., ed. (Santa Cruz, California: New Society Publishers, 1990). This book contains several articles explaining the concept of bioregionalism.</p> <p>Gary Snyder, <u>The Practice of the Wild</u> (San Francisco, California: North Point Press, 1990). Essays about bioregionalism.</p>	<p><u>Imperiled Planet: Restoring Our Endangered Ecosystems</u> (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990). A beautiful book full of colorful photographs with information on various aspects of the ecological crisis.</p> <p><u>Our Changing Earth</u>, Thomas Canby (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1994). Another lovely book of color photographs and information about the global ecological crisis.</p>
	<p><u>The Global Ecology Handbook: What You Can Do About the Environmental Crisis</u>, by the Global Tomorrow Coalition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990). A comprehensive overview of the global ecological crisis and suggestions for action.</p> <p><u>Global Economics: Seeking a Christian Ethic</u>, Ian McCrae (New York: Friendship Press, 1993). An excellent and highly readable introduction to global economics. Great cartoons!</p>

## **ECOLOGY AND INJUSTICE**

Toxic Nation: The Fight to Save Our Communities from Chemical Contamination, Fred Setterberg and Lonny Shavelson (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1993). Investigative reporting about the extent and effects of toxic pollution in different communities around the country. Gives inspiring examples of courageous responses by citizens groups, and is full of information. Reads like a novel.

God and Gaia: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing, Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1990). An ecofeminist theological perspective from a renowned theologian, in the context of current issues relating to ecological and justice issues today.

No Time To Waste: Poverty and the Global Environment, by Joan Davidson et al. (Oxford OX2 7DZ: Oxfam, 1992). Documents the devastating effect that the ecological crisis is having on the poorest of the poor around the world.

Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development by Vandana Shiva (New Jersey: Zed Books LTD, 1989). Gives an overview of the harm that ecological destruction causes to women and their children, and shows how some Indian women are organizing to improve their situations.

## **ETHICS, RELIGION, AND PUBLIC POLICY**

Covenant for a New Creation: Ethics, Religion, and Public Policy, edited by Carol S. Robb and Carl J. Casebolt (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991). Co-published with the Center for Ethics and Social Policy of the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA. Essays showing how a biblical system of ethics based on community and the common good can and should assist in forming public policy.

Reclaiming America: Restoring Nature to Culture, by Richard Austin (Creekside Press), discusses possible approaches to reversing the earth-destroying trends in America today.

The Greening of the Church, by Sean McDonagh (Orbis Books), explains what a devastating effect the world debt crisis has on the environment of developing nations, and discusses what can be done.

## **NEWSLETTERS**

"Environmental Justice News," a quarterly newsletter published by the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, 100 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002. (202)488-5600. Cost is \$10.

"Earth-Justice", a quarterly newsletter published for the Eco-Justice Committee of the California-Pacific Conference Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church by The Reverend Peter Moore-Kochlacs, United Methodist Environmental Ministries, 7528 Garden Grove Ave., Reseda, CA 91335. (818) 344-7870.

"EarthLight: Magazine of Spirituality and Ecology", a newsletter just full of news, commentaries, book reviews, and information about resources and upcoming events. Published quarterly by Unity with Nature Committee of Pacific Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends. Send \$15 to EarthLight, 1558 Mercy Street, Mountain View, CA 94041.



# Notes

## Introduction

1. The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church (Nashville, Tennessee: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), page 62.
2. Neil M. Alexander, ed., The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (Nashville, Tennessee: The United Methodist Publishing House), page 80.
3. John Wesley, Letters, VI, page 272. Letter to Alexander Mather, August 6, 1777.

## Session 1

1. As quoted by Sherwood Eliot and Kirston Beckstrom Wirt, Living Quotations for Christians (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), page 95.
2. John Wesley, A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation or a Compendium of Natural Philosophy, Volume 1 (Bristol: Printed by William Pine, 1763), pages 229-230.
3. This quotation is cited from EarthSpirit: A Handbook for Nurturing an Ecological Spirituality, copyright © 1991 by Michael Dowd (paper, 120 pp, \$7.95), published by Twenty-Third Publications, P.O. Box 180, Mystic, Connecticut 06355. Toll free: 1-800-321-0411
4. EarthSpirit, page 7.
5. As quoted in EarthSpirit, page 94.
6. Excerpt from Gaia and God by Rosemary Radford Ruether, page 270. Copyright © 1992 by Rosemary Radford Ruether. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
7. Edward Denis, Jesus and the Cosmos (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1991), page 12.
8. Denis Postle, Fabric of the Universe (New York, New York: Crown Publishers, 1976), pages 74-77.
9. EarthSpirit, page 16.

## Session 2

1. Albert C. Outler, Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit (Nashville, Tennessee: Discipleship Resources - Tidings, 1975), page 40.
2. Excerpts from Earth in the Balance. Copyright © 1992 by Senator Al Gore, page 162-163. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Co. All rights reserved.
3. Earth in the Balance, page 27.
4. The Book of Resolutions, page 63.

## Session 3

1. Maxie D. Dunnam, Our Journey: a Wesleyan View of the Christian Way (Nashville, Tennessee: Discipleship Resources, 1984), page 75.
2. Gaia and God, pages 2-3.
3. From "The Church's Role in Healing the Earth," by Mary Evelyn Jegen, in Tending the Garden: Essays on the Gospel and the Earth, edited by Wesley Granberg Michaelson. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), page 93.
4. EarthSpirit, page 40.

## Session 4

1. As quoted in Celebrating Holidays and Rites of Passage (Ellenwood, Georgia: Alternatives, 1988), page 160.
2. Our Journey, page 66.
3. Richard J. Foster, Freedom of Simplicity (New York, New York: Harper and Row, 1989), page 127.
4. Freedom of Simplicity.
5. Lester Brown, et.al, State of the World, 1991: A Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress Toward a Sustainable Society (New York, New York: W.W. Norton, 1991) page 161.
6. Earth in the Balance, page 147.
7. Philip Elmer-Dewitt, "Rich vs. Poor," Time Magazine (June 1, 1992), page 43.

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8. State of the World, 1991, (page 160).
9. Nancy G. Wright and Donald Kill, Ecological Healing: a Christian Vision (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), pages 12-13.
10. State of the World, 1991, page 153.
11. Richard and Julia Wilke, Disciple II: Into the Word Into the World Study Manual (Nashville, Tennessee: Cokesbury, 1991), page 108.

## Session 5

1. The Book of Discipline, PP 70.
2. As quoted in EarthSpirit, page 22.
3. As quoted in Cheryl Cook, et.al., ed., A Directory of Environmental Activities and Resources in the North American Religious Community. Summer, 1992 (New York, New York: Joint Appeal by Religion and Science for the Environment, 1992), page 122.
4. The Book of Resolutions, page 61.
5. A Directory of Environmental Activities and Resources, page 89.
6. As quoted in EarthSpirit, page 22.

## Session 6

1. Clare George Weakley, Jr., The Nature of Holiness: John Wesley (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers 1988), page 132.
2. The Book of Resolutions, page 72.
3. Earth in the Balance, page 30-31.
4. Gary Snyder, The Practice of the Wild (San Francisco, California: North Point Press, 1990), page 39.
5. As quoted in EarthSpirit, page 45.
6. Family Farming: A New Economic Vision, Marty Strange (San Francisco, California: Institute of Food and Development Policy, 1988), page 99.

7. Matt Burry, ed., Fact Sheet #10: "The Amazon," from Rainforest Action Network, 450 Sansome, Suite 700, San Francisco, California 94133.

## Session 7

1. David Lowes Watson, Accountable Discipleship: Handbook for Covenant Discipleship Groups in the Congregation (Nashville, Tennessee: Discipleship Resources, 1984), page 21.
2. The Book of Resolutions, page 63.
3. As quoted in EarthSpirit, page 99.
4. Philip Elmer-Dewitt, "Rich vs. Poor," Time Magazine, June 1, 1992. p.43.
5. As quoted in EarthSpirit, page 94.
6. Earth in the Balance, page 85.
7. Earth in the Balance, page 85.
8. As quoted in EarthSpirit, page 94.

## Session 8

1. Leon H. Hynson, To Reform the Nation: Theological Foundations of Wesley's Ethics (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1984), page 7.
2. The Book of Discipline, PP 74.
3. As quoted in Earth in the Balance, page 191.
4. Philip Elmer-Dewitt, "Rich vs. Poor," Time Magazine, June 1, 1992, page 51.
5. Earth in the Balance, page 181.
6. Fact Sheet #10: "The Amazon."
7. As quoted in EarthSpirit, page 42.
8. The Book of Discipline, PP 74.

## Session 9

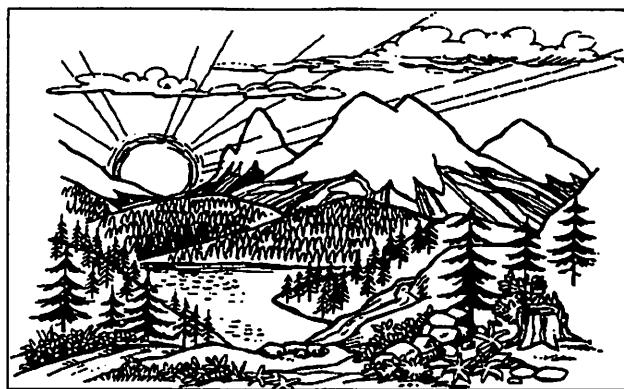
1. Our Journey, page 79.
2. The Book of Discipline, PP 76.

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3. Richard Bauckham, "Jurgen Moltman," in The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Volume I. David E. Ford, ed., (Campbell, Massachusetts: Basil Black Ltd., 1990), page 299.
4. As quoted in Stephen B. Scharper and Hillary Cunningham, ed., The Green Bible, (Maryknoll, New York, 1993), page 77.
5. From "Creation, Church and Christian Responsibility," by Larry L. Rasmussen, in Tending the Garden; page 123.

## Session 10

1. The Book of Discipline, PP 75.
2. Earth in the Balance, page 189.
3. State of the World, 1991, page 164.
4. Earth in the Balance, page 16.
5. Accountable Discipleship, page 18.
6. Gaia and God, page 269.



**Other organizations related to environmental justice with which the General Board of Church and Society works in partnership and/or coalition:**

**Biotechnology Working Group**  
PO Box 2987  
Washington, DC 20007  
202-543-0233

**Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture**  
32 N. Church St.  
Goshen, NY 10924  
914-294-0633

**Clean Water Network**  
1350 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-624-9357

**Citizen's Network for Sustainable Development**  
73 Spring St, Rm 206  
New York, NY 10012  
212-431-3938

**Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras**  
3120 W. Ashby  
San Antonio, TX 78228  
210-732-8957

**Endangered Species Coalition**  
666 Pennsylvania Ave. NE  
Washington DC 20003  
202-547-9009

**Energy Conservation Coalition**  
6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 600  
Takoma Park, MD 20912  
301-891-1100

**Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility**  
Energy and Environment Working Group  
475 Riverside Drive, 5th floor  
New York City, NY 10115  
212-870-2623

**League of Conservation Voters**  
1707 L St. N.W., Room 550  
Washington DC 20036  
202-785-8683

**Rural Coalition**  
Health and Environment Project  
P.O. Box 5199  
Arlington, VA 22205  
703-534-1845

**Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund**  
1531 P Street, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-667-4500

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